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**STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN WAJIR COUNTY GOVERNMENT, KENYA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study investigated the influence of strategic leadership on organizational performance in Wajir County Government in Kenya. In particular, the study sought to examine the influence of strategic direction, human capital development, ethical practices and effective organizational culture on organizational performance in Wajir County Government. The study was underpinned on the transformational leadership theory, the trait leadership theory, the path-goal theory of leadership, the human capital theory, deontological and teleological ethical theories, the Denison's organizational culture model as well as the balanced scorecard model. The study employed a survey research design. It targeted 655 officials/staff holding various senior and middle level management positions in the County Government of Wajir including the elected Members of County Assembly. Stratified sampling technique was considered where 248 county officials/staff holding the said positions took part in the study. Primary and secondary data was gathered through a semi- structured questionnaire and a secondary data collection template respectively. In analyzing the data, descriptive analysis as well as inferential analysis was undertaken. Multiple linear regression model was fitted. The study established that strategic direction, human capital development, ethical practices and effective organizational culture positively and significantly influenced organizational performance in Wajir County Government. Among the recommendations of this study was that the county government's leadership and management should hold regular and continuous open and consultative meetings with all county staff where the county government's mission, long-term vision, strategic goals and priorities as well as the county master plan are articulated or reiterated. Lobbying for incremental and adequate budgetary allocations towards the implementation of regular and continuous staff capacity building programs by the human resource department was also recommended. It was also recommended that the county government's leadership and management should exploit a combination of sanctions and incentives to inculcate and maintain an ethical culture in the county government by steering voluntary or enforced adherence to ethical codes of conduct, core values and laid down ethical policies and standards.*

**Key Words:** Strategic Direction, Human Capital Development, Ethical Practices, Effective Organizational Culture

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## INTRODUCTION

Across the world, devolution is highly accepted as a vital reform in governance which plays a critical role in enhancing performance within the public sector (Ong'era & Musili, 2019). Some of the countries that have embraced devolution include Spain, Chile, Sweden, Nigeria, South Africa and Kenya. Devolution is mainly embraced as a way of enhancing development and efficient delivery of crucial public services at the very grassroots level (Bosire, 2019). For that reason, excellent organizational performance of devolved governments is indispensable in ensuring that citizens access reliable services and in the long run, economic development is realized in their jurisdictions (Munga, Momanyi & Omari, 2021).

Evidence from different nations reveals that even though there has been some success, the performance of devolved or decentralized governments has not been satisfactory in many cases. Dick-Sagoe (2020) argues that in developing nations, performance of devolved/decentralized units has been mixed citing cases of poor service delivery, unmet development targets and low employee productivity due to lack of motivation and key competencies. In Brazil, Gomes, Alfinito, and Albuquerque (2018) observe that, in several municipalities, the mayors faced difficulties in raising adequate revenues and meeting their financial obligations. As a result, these local governments remained highly dependent on external sources of funds and in decision making, the choices of the mayors were constrained.

In South Africa, Glasser and Wright (2020) highlight the financial distress in municipalities noting that these units are challenged by insufficient own-source revenue (OSR) which makes them increasingly reliant on funding by the central government as well. The municipalities are unable to stimulate substantial economic activities thus accumulating huge debts and pending bills. Similar observations have been reported in Ghanaian local governments by Otoo and Danquah (2021). While the formation of county governments in Kenya has

brought significant transformations such as socio-economic development and enhanced equitable distribution of national resources, the full gains from devolution have not been realized due to among others, performance challenges witnessed across all counties (Ngigi & Busolo, 2019). Poor delivery of crucial public services has been reported in many county governments since the early stages of devolution (Kerubo & Muturi, 2019; Zeng et al., 2022).

Leadership is considered by Jaleha and Machuki (2018) as a key determining factor of an entity's health, general growth and survival. In all sectors, noble leadership is deemed essential since it helps motivate, inspire and communicate the envisaged objectives of an organization in a sufficient manner (Appelbaum et al., 2015). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, embracing strategic leadership is fundamental for public sector entities as it goes a long way in empowering team leaders by assisting them in envisioning, anticipating and creating changes strategically (Nahak & Ellitan, 2022). Therefore, it is essential that the leadership of devolved governments adopt strategic thinking in their day-to-day duties and activities for superior performance. This argument is founded on the basis that strategic thinking assists in unleashing individuals' strengths and potential which ultimately boost organizational performance (AlQershi, 2021).

Shimengah (2018) argues that devolved governments can boost their performance by embracing strategic leadership since the defining organizational strategic intent and mission helps employees to stay focused and work toward shared goals for which sustained excellent organizational performance is a priority. Munga, Momanyi and Omari (2021) also argue that strategic leadership in county governments is able to steer these entities towards short- and long-term viability by offering training and other initiatives which enable subordinates to reach their maximum potential seen in their overall productivity. The authors also argue that strategic leadership in county

governments is able to cultivate particular organizational cultures which result superior organizational performance.

One of the key determinants of an organization's survival is its performance. A commonly held view in literature is that organizational performance is a multidimensional construct and hence, a single universal measure of an organizations' overall performance does not exist (Barney, 2020). For that reason, diverse measures of organizational performance have been advanced and supported by different scholars and do vary from one organization to another or a sector to another (Masa'deh et al., 2018). Organizational performance encompasses both financial and non-financial indicators which explain to what extent an organization has been able to realize its set goals (Devi, 2017). Measuring the performance of an organization using only financial indicators is considered inadequate and consequently, non-financial indicators have increasingly been adopted for this purpose (Kakwezi & Nyeko, 2019).

Strategic leadership is displayed when a senior organizational leader with the requisite experience and having a clear vision and wisdom, has the capability of developing and executing set plans besides making vital decisions in the strategic environment characterized by unpredictability, uncertainty, complexities and vagueness (Mistarihi, 2021; Miriti, 2021). A number of scholars such as Crowley (2022) and Stowell and Mead (2016) have argued that quite a large number of leaders normally ignore or do not think of the required strategy or the future. Moreover, it is emphasized by several researchers such as Kabetu and Iravo (2018), Kung'u, Kahuthia and Kinyua (2020) and Islam et al. (2022) that there is need for leaders in an organization to ensure that all units are directed accordingly. Therefore, it can be summarized that strategic leadership encompasses leaders' ability to direct and redirect motives so that the sustainability of organizations' existence is guaranteed (Ojogiwa, 2021).

Overall, strategic leadership is associated with

innovativeness and consultative efforts towards attaining an organization's objectives which translates to enhanced performance (Wakere, 2019). It is also argued by Jaleha and Machuki (2018) that top managers in an organization have adequate discretion and strategic choices which impact organizational performance. Strategic leaders facilitate the realization of excellent performance by supporting their entities to better handle the dynamics of their external environments (Kabetu & Iravo, 2018). Strategic leadership is also associated with crucial "organizational change which can influence an organization's performance (Covin & Slevin, 2017). This study investigated how strategic leadership in the County Government of Wajir had influenced organizational performance.

Wajir County is an ASAL county located in the North Eastern Region of Kenya (County Government of Wajir, 2018) and livestock keeping is the major economic activity among the residents (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Among the challenges hindering optimal performance in Wajir County Government is the underperformance of OSR where collection was 9 percent of the county potential, poor access to crucial services, inadequate human capacity and high staff turnover in key sectors and poor governance (County Government of Wajir, 2023). While strategic leadership is championed as means of boosting organizational performance in devolved governments, this concept remained unexplored in Wajir County Government. This study would go a long way to show the extent strategic leadership had been embraced in this county government and the performance outcomes.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In Kenya, county governments are considered major drivers of grassroots development in Kenya and due to the vast budgets allocated to them, their performance in terms of realization of OSR targets and service delivery, for instance, is vital (Dambala, 2021). One of the major concerns hindering the realization of full gains from devolution is the various performance challenges

faced by many county governments (Bosharo & Abuga, 2021). Wajir County Government is no exception. The County Governments Annual Budget Implementation Review Reports produced by the Office of the Controller of Budget (OCOB) for the last five years showed that the county government had not been able to meet its annual OSR targets. For the FY 2018/19 to FY 2022/23, the annual targets realized were 30.1%, 40.3%, 49.3%, 52.2% and 46.7% respectively (OCOB, 2020; 2021, 2022, 2023). Huge amounts of pending bills amounting to Kshs. 3.47 billion were recorded as of 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022 where the county government only managed to settle pending bills valued at Kshs. 364.88 million. The report also raised a concern of unapproved usage of financial resources not for the earlier intended purposes (Government of Kenya, 2022). Slow development and poor service delivery in core sectors such as livestock and water, healthcare and education have also been highlighted by Omar and Moi (2020). As such, the county remained largely underdeveloped lagging behind in many development indicators (Masetu, Mbebe & Nzioki, 2021).

Numerous scholars have put forth the argument that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the concept of strategic leadership is increasingly becoming a fundamental instrument for steering the adoption of a value driven culture within the public sector (Gaitho et al., 2019). Hence, Kenyan county governments and more so Wajir County Government could reap several benefits from enhanced strategic leadership. For instance, by being able to determine the strategic direction through specification of county priorities, the top management/leadership of the county government could steer enhanced development towards improved service delivery in key sectors such as water. Emphasizing on ethical practices and also promoting an effective organizational culture could also help minimize the reported wastage and shifting resources to non-priority areas during CIDP implementation and in so doing, boost the county government's overall performance. This research

investigated the influence of strategic leadership on organizational performance in the County Government of Wajir, a study area that had not been exhaustively explored in available literature.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study sought to investigate the influence of strategic leadership on organizational performance in Wajir County Government in Kenya. The specific objectives of this study were: -

- To determine the influence of strategic direction on organizational performance in Wajir County Government in Kenya.
- To establish the influence of human capital development on organizational performance in Wajir County Government in Kenya.
- To examine the influence of ethical practices on organizational performance in Wajir County Government in Kenya.
- To determine the influence of effective organizational culture on organizational performance in Wajir County Government in Kenya.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Transformational Leadership Theory**

This theory was advanced in 1978 by leadership expert McGregor Burns, who emphasized the differences between a regular leader, known as a transactional leader, who traded material rewards for work completed and also devotion that employees embodied, and an exceptional leader, known as a transformational leader, who could interact with their followers and paid attention to priority indispensable needs in addition to creating awareness of the significance of particular outcomes and also sophisticated ways to ensure that these outcomes are realized (McGregor, 1978). As to the view, Judge and Piccolo (2004) note that leaders that are deemed transformative have the capacity to motivate their followers to transcend their individual self-interests and have a deep understanding of having the capacity to deeply and

extraordinarily influence people who come after them.

Consistent to the theory's argument, Zacharatos, Barling and Kelloway (2000) underline that transformational leaders can also gain the admiration and faith of their subordinates by acting in a way that always demonstrates fairness, doing the right things and not what was deemed convenient, making sure that they raise followers' awareness of the organizations' missions and visions, for which they put efforts to achieve, and ensuring that they raise the expectations of their followers regarding what they can accomplish. They could motivate the followers to work toward the organizations' objectives in this way. In addition to stimulating creative thinking and innovation among their followers, these leaders also gain the respect and trust of their juniors by encouraging them to see obstacles from a fresh perspective. They also ensure that their followers receive personalized attention that takes into account their needs as well as their abilities, in addition to being crucial to their own personal development (Robbins & Judge, 2005). This theory as stated by Vera and Crossan (2004), is fundamentally linked to the objective of strategic leadership which includes foreseeing, imagining, remaining adaptable, and enabling others to achieve strategic changes that are necessary for the entities.

### **Trait Leadership Theory**

The well-known writings of Kirkpatrick and Locke (1996), Mann (1959), Lord (1991), and Stogdill (1948; 1974) birthed this theory. One of the first ideas in the field of leadership, this theory focuses on the characteristics of a good leader rather than the actions taken by them. According to Bhatia (2009), this theory implies that successful leaders have a particular set of traits and attributes. Physical and social attributes, as well as task-related and social qualities that are innate and help a leader succeed, are the obvious features of good leaders.

According to Northouse's (2013) empirical research, there is evidence that certain attributes

play a momentous role in entities' effectiveness and performance. With each new generation of leaders, the list of these characteristics is long and continues to expand. Even though there have been several research on the diversity of leadership attributes, there have been specific objections raised against this theory. It has been criticized for a number of reasons, including the claims that leadership attributes are not innate, supernatural, or mysterious (Northouse, 2013) and that success is not solely attributable to a leader's personal traits. Bhatia (2009) contends that an organization cannot achieve effectiveness solely through the qualities and features of its leadership since this claim is supported by data found in literature.

### **Path-Goal Leadership Theory**

This theory was initially crafted by Evans (1970) and later advanced by House (1971). According to Northouse (2016), the path-goal theory of leadership essentially pays attention to the manner in which leaders inspire their followers to realize the set objectives. The basis of this theory is how employees or subordinates perceive what is expected of them, their efforts as well as their performance, all of which are directly connected to their leaders' behaviours (Polston-Murdoch, 2013). Under this theory, four styles of leadership behaviour are identified (Bans-Akutey, 2021).

The directive style emphasizes that leaders should instruct their followers exactly what they ought to do and how to do it alongside the timeframes, rules and also the regulations they must adhere to (Adade, 2021). The supportive style leads to the creation of an environment which is friendly and where subordinates can effortlessly approach their leaders (Saleem & Noshaba, 2021). Participative style is an all-inclusive process where leaders involve their subordinates in the process of making decisions while the achievement-oriented style challenges employees to at all times perform excellently with the leaders being confident that their subordinates have the ability to realize what has been planned (Carroll, 2017; Kistenfeger & Vinitwatanakhun, 2018). Generally, "path-goal

theory argues that good leaders provide clear direction, set high goals, get involved in goal achievement and support their employees (Saleem et al., 2021).

### **Human Capital Theory**

This theory was originally put forth by Becker (1964). A major argument of this theory is that individuals with more or higher human capital are able to perform better when carrying out tasks (Becker, 1964). In this case, human capital entails the stock of skills, knowledge and capabilities residing within individuals. It encompasses their unique insights, talents cognitive characteristics and aptitudes (Ventakaraman, 2019). It also encompasses accrued attributes and habits that can positively or adversely affect productivity (Becker, 2009). The value of human capital theory is extensively recognized in the pursuit of enhanced organizational performance as organizations rely on the value created by employees through their skills, knowledge and abilities of employees (Wuttaphan, 2017).

Human capital theory underscores the importance of education and training in augmenting workers' productivity by "boosting the degree of cognitive stock of economically productive human capability, which is a product of intrinsic abilities and human capital investment (Almendarez, 2013). Human capital investment entails expanding the capacity of human resources through education, skill training, productivity, and creativity. The theory holds the assumption that the skills and knowledge acquired by individual workers equips them with the necessary competencies and operational capabilities which enhance their job performance (Chakraborty & Biswas, 2019; Abbas et al., 2022).

### **Deontological and Teleological Ethical Theories**

This study adopted the deontological and teleological ethical theories in examining the link between emphasis on ethical practices and organizational performance. The deontological approach holds that any action is viewed as either right or wrong on the basis of the stipulated rules and obligations individuals strive to fulfill and not

the consequences of their actions (Xu & Ma, 2016). Leadership aligned to deontological theory concentrates on adhering to rules and obligation as a way of determining if actions are right or not as a duty (Jamnik, 2019). This theory, as alluded by Okanda, Mwinzi and Gunga (2021) is applicable in the context of strategic leadership in which leaders and their juniors are mandated to conduct or carry themselves in line with the established moral principles, organizational visions and values as a matter of obligation or duty when undertaking their responsibilities. Deontological ethical theory, thus, acts as an ethical framework crucial in guiding the conduct of county leadership and management and their subordinates in fulfilling their duties or obligations in addition to the motivation of ethical practices which encompass devotion to duty, discipline, accountability and integrity as well as ethical decision making.

### **Denison Organizational Culture Model**

In their model, Denison (1990) identified four major elements or traits namely involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission as vital in the development and sustenance of an effective organizational culture within an organization. At the core of this model are the "organization's beliefs and assumptions which are the deeply held aspects of an organization's identity that are often difficult to access (Bailey, 2022). The four elements of this model usually measure the behaviours driven by these beliefs and assumptions that create an effective organization's culture" (Rahil & Dumitru, 2019).

Involvement encompasses transparency in communications, leadership styles that are considerate of employees and strong interpersonal relationships within the organization (Christopher & Edwinah, 2022). In an effective organizational culture, organizational leadership emphasize on involving all employees in key activities and decision making processes (Kiziloglu, 2021). This helps employees develop a sense of ownership, trust, and loyalty for the organizations which inspires responsibility and accountability in

individual actions (Denison, 1990). This motivates employees to perform excellently in their jobs.

### **Balanced Scorecard Model**

The balanced scorecard concept, which was put forth by Kaplan and Norton in 1996, recommends that managers evaluate an organization's performance using four criteria: the financial, customer, learning as well as innovation perspectives (Bentes et al., 2012). According to Almado, Santos, and Marques (2012), the balanced scorecard combines financial as well as non-financial metrics into a single method of measurement. It derives its ideals and goals from the organizations' strategies and visions, providing managers with a broad foundation that helps to shape the organization's vision and strategy into a cohesive set of performance metrics (Northcott & Taulapapa, 2012). Because financial figures lacked predictive power, Kaplan and Norton concluded that using them alone was no longer sufficient to guarantee that a company is run efficiently. They thus created a scorecard featuring the four previously described views (Hoque & Adams, 2011).

The balanced scorecard attempts to include information about the organization's performance status going forward in addition to reflecting its current performance monitoring (Yap & Ferreira, 2011). Since then, it has developed into an essential management tool that helps people in charge of businesses clarify, manage, and communicate their strategies (Hoque & Adams, 2011). In practice, organizations use this approach to accomplish four key management processes: communicating and connecting strategic objectives and measures, target setting, improving tactical feedback and learning and also ensuring that any strategic initiative is well planned and aligned. These are the four essential management processes (Jurevicius, 2013). In accordance with the goals and criteria established by the county government in its strategic plan and vision, this model directed the assessment of Wajir County Government organizational performance using both financial and non-financial metrics. The

financial metrics entailed the own source revenue collected and payment of pending bills while the non-financial performance measures consisted of employee productivity, citizens' satisfaction with services and realization of PC targets.

### **Empirical Literature Review**

#### **Strategic Direction and Organizational Performance**

The study by Kithama (2022) regarding how strategic leadership practices impacted the performance of Tharaka Nithi County Government using a case study design revealed that the top management of this county government determined the county government's strategic direction by setting its organizational mission and vision which guided all the operations of the county employees. It was observed that all the county government staff worked towards ensuring that the county government's mission was fulfilled. This measure according to the study, enhanced unity of purpose in county operations thus boosting the county government's organizational performance seen in efficient delivery of quality services. While the study was highly related to the current investigation, it was undertaken in a different context and only considered quality of services delivered as a measure of organizational performance. Also, a case study design was considered thus hindering the testing of the relationship between study variables. This research gap was addressed by considering other measures of organizational performance aside from service delivery and also adopting a survey research design which made it possible to test the relationship between variables.

#### **Human Capital Development and Organizational Performance**

Based on a survey of maritime agencies in Kenya, Otieno and Lewa (2020) discovered that strategic human capital development had a positive substantial effect on the organizational performance of these agencies depicted by improved customer satisfaction, delivery of quality services, efficient operations and reduced



operational costs. The study observed that the top managements of these agencies were keen on hiring diverse staff possessing diverse capabilities and relevant skills and competencies, implementing frequent staff training and development programs, and also offering motivation incentives to employees. Moreover, the agencies' management ensured that employees had the necessary resources needed to steer the accomplishment of the agencies' goals and vision and also cultivated their creativity and innovativeness. According to this study, developing human capital enabled the agencies to utilize their human resources to realize their organizational strategic intent, goals and objectives thus supporting excellent organizational performance. Even though this past study was related to the current study, it targeted the maritime sector which was a different context from the county governments and hence, its findings could only be generalized with caution.

#### **Ethical Practices and Organizational Performance**

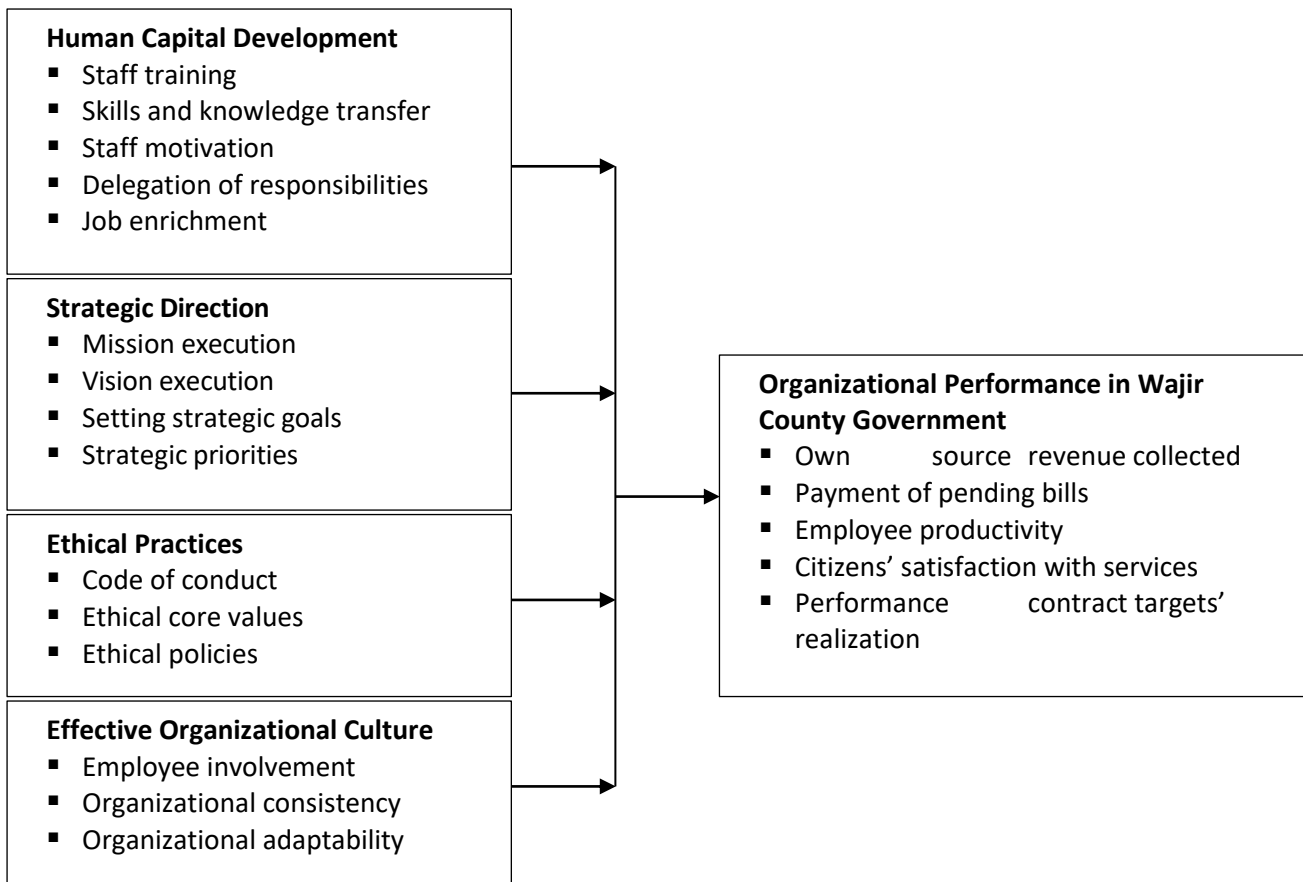
Bose and Ndegwa (2019) assessed how strategic leadership affected organizational performance of DCI, Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive research design and employees in the senior, middle and lower levels of management took part in the study. The study established that emphasizing ethical practices in terms of having and enforcing a code of conduct, pertinent core values and various ethical principles and policies positively and in a significant manner, affected the organizational performance of this state agency seen in improved quality of services delivered, teamwork, operational efficiency and customer satisfaction. Emphasizing on ethical practices ensured that employees aligned their individual actions with the interests of the agency, improved reputation, trust and confidence in the agency was achieved and also, cases of fraud, corruption and mismanagement of the agency's resources were minimized. All these culminated to enhanced organizational performance. Though this study provided a crucial background for this current research, it was undertaken in a different context

and since the county government environment is different, its findings could only be generalized with caution. The measures of organizational performance considered also differed from those adopted in the county government context.

#### **Effective Organizational Culture and Organizational Performance**

The study by Wakhisi (2021) on the implications of strategic leadership on the performance of sugar manufacturing firms owned by the state in Western Kenya found a notable positive connection between building an effective organizational culture and the firms' performance depicted by the growth in sales volume, net profits and market shares as well as asset growth. The study underlined the need for the top leadership and management of these firms to emphasize on shared core values, symbols and ideologies unique to the firms and which gave the firms a competitive edge. The study argued that particular organizational cultures like market culture, consensual culture, entrepreneurial and competitive culture resulted in positive organizational performance. Comparing this research to the current study, its focus was on sugar firms a context which was different from the county government environment and hence, generalizing its findings in the current context was limited.

## Conceptual Framework



### Independent Variables

### Dependent Variable

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study**

Source: Researcher (2024)

## METHODOLOGY

In this research study, a cross-sectional survey research design was embraced. The study targeted Wajir County Government officials or staff holding various senior and middle level management positions including the elected Members of County Assembly. Stratified sampling method was preferred in selecting the sample for this study. To draw staff from each stratum, random sampling was applied and the number selected was determined by the calculated proportionate weights.

The study used both primary and secondary data. Secondary data on various indicators of the county government's organizational performance for a

period of 10 years was as well gathered. The primary data was collected firsthand from the chosen county officials or staff. The secondary data was collected from the audited county annual financial statements and reports released by the OCOB and the County Government of Wajir.

A pilot test was undertaken majorly for the purposes of checking whether the questionnaire was deemed reliable or valid. The pilot test was carried out at the Garissa County Government's headquarters and a total of 24 participants representing 10% of the calculated sample size for the study were considered.

In assessing the questionnaire's validity, the expert opinion of the research mentor and supervisor

regarding the structure of the questionnaire and how meaningful its contents were was considered. Testing the questionnaire's reliability in this research entailed computing Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) coefficients which were the most appropriate measures of reliability when a survey questionnaire contained multiple Likert questions forming a construct.

## **FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS**

### **Response Rate**

A total 248 questionnaires were administered to staff holding various senior and middle level management positions in Wajir County Government including the elected MCAs. 184 of these questionnaires were satisfactorily filled and returned translating to a successful response rate of 74.2% for this study. This response rate was considered adequate for data analysis and reporting.

### **Descriptive Analysis**

#### **Descriptive Analysis on Strategic Direction**

The study sought to determine the influence of strategic direction on organizational performance in Wajir County Government in Kenya. Descriptive statistics were first computed to determine the extent the county government's management determined the strategic direction in the county government. In this case, the sampled county staff based on a five point Likert scale, indicated their degree of agreement or disagreement with seven (7) items that were related to the determination of strategic direction by the management in Wajir County Government. The means and standard deviations for each item and also the overall construct were considered and interpreted. The following criteria was adopted when interpreting the mean values across all constructs in the study: a mean of 1.000-1.499 denoted Strongly Disagree, 1.500-2.499 meant Disagree, 2.500-3.499 signified Neither Agree nor Disagree, 3.500-4.499 represented Agree while 4.500-5.000 indicated Strongly Agree. The results obtained are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Strategic Direction**

Item/ Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
The ability of county government leadership and management to determine strategic direction in the county has significantly affected organizational performance.	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.0%	0.00%	4.000	0.000
The county government leadership and management have articulated the mission statement for the county government that shapes its organizational strategies and also enhances its capacity to achieve its goals.	0.00%	21.70%	0.00%	78.30%	0.00%	3.565	0.827
The county government leadership and management always specifies and communicates to all staff the various strategies needed to realize county performance objectives and targets.	5.40%	10.90%	16.30%	67.40%	0.00%	3.457	0.892
There is in place a realistic long-term county vision that enables the county government leadership and management to inspire staff to commit, focus and give their very best in their work towards achieving common goals.	0.00%	27.20%	5.40%	67.40%	0.00%	3.402	0.888
The county government leadership and management at all times and in a clear manner, articulate the strategic priorities which staff must direct their efforts on in staff meetings.	0.00%	27.20%	10.90%	62.00%	0.00%	3.348	0.880
The county government leadership and management always sets clear strategic goals aligned to the county's development plans and which enable performance evaluation and control.	0.00%	27.20%	16.30%	56.50%	0.00%	3.293	0.869
The county government leadership and management has set up an articulate, persuasive and attainable master plan necessary to steer the county government in the right track.	0.00%	43.50%	5.40%	51.10%	0.00%	3.076	0.972
<b>Composite Mean and Standard Deviation</b>						<b>3.449</b>	<b>0.583</b>
<b>Valid N=184</b>							

As revealed in Table 1, on average, the sampled county staff agreed that the ability of the county government leadership and management to determine strategic direction in the county had significantly affected organizational performance. This argument is supported by the computed mean value of 4.000 and a standard deviation of 0.000. The county staff also on average agreed that the

county government leadership and management had articulated the mission statement for the county government that shaped its organizational strategies and also enhanced its capacity to achieve its goals as revealed by the mean value of 3.565 and a standard deviation of 0.827. On the contrary, the sampled county staff on average neither agreed nor disagreed that the county government

leadership and management always specified and communicated to all staff the various strategies needed to realize county performance objectives and targets as confirmed by the mean value of 3.457 a standard deviation of 0.892. Similarly, the county staff on average, neither agreed nor disagreed that there was in place a realistic long-term county vision that enabled the county government leadership and management to inspire staff to commit, focus and give their very best in their work towards achieving common goals. This is demonstrated by the calculated mean value of 3.402 and a standard deviation of 0.888.

On average, the county staff neither agreed nor disagreed that the county government leadership and management at all times and in a clear manner, articulated the strategic priorities which staff must direct their efforts on in staff meetings. As affirmed by the mean value of 3.348 and a standard deviation of 0.880. Moreover, the county staff on average neither agreed nor disagreed that the county government leadership and management always set clear strategic goals aligned to the county's development plans and which enabled performance evaluation and control as shown by the mean value of 3.293 and a standard deviation of 0.869. The county staff on average further neither agreed nor disagreed that

the county government leadership and management had set up an articulate, persuasive and attainable master plan necessary to steer the county government in the right track as supported by the computed mean value of 3.076 and a standard deviation of 0.972. The composite mean value of 3.449 and a standard deviation of 0.583 suggested that on average, the county staff who took part in this study neither agreed nor disagreed with most of the statements in this strategic direction construct. From these findings, it can also be inferred that the determination of strategic direction by the leadership and management in Wajir County Government needed to be improved or optimized to a large extent.

#### **Descriptive Analysis on Human Capital Development**

The second objective of the study was to establish the influence of human capital development on organizational performance in Wajir County Government in Kenya. The level of human capital development in this county government was first determined by asking the staff to county staff to react to six (6) items on the human capital development construct where they indicated the extent they agreed or disagreed with the statements presented to them. Their responses are captured in Table 2.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Human Capital Development**

Item/ Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
The county government leadership and management usually delegate some duties to their juniors to empower them to take up more challenging roles and responsibilities.	0.00%	5.40%	5.40%	89.10%	0.00%	3.837	0.496
The commitment of the county government leadership and management to developing human capital has significantly affected the county's organizational performance.	0.00%	5.40%	10.90%	83.70%	0.00%	3.783	0.529
The county government leadership and management encourage the use of different types of skills to implement tasks, autonomy and feedback to help improve staff performance.	0.00%	16.30%	21.70%	62.00%	0.00%	3.457	0.760
The county government leadership and management usually emphasize staff's exposure to new and requisite skills and knowledge needed to effectively handle their daily tasks and responsibilities.	5.40%	38.00%	0.00%	51.10%	5.40%	3.130	1.147
The county government leadership and management have invested in tangible incentives for motivating staff to perform beyond expectations in their daily tasks and responsibilities.	5.40%	47.80%	0.00%	46.70%	0.00%	2.880	1.075
The county government leadership and management always sets aside adequate funds to facilitate the implementation of regular and continuous staff training programs tailored to address identified training needs.	10.90%	68.50%	0.00%	20.70%	0.00%	2.304	0.920
<b>Composite Mean and Standard deviation</b>						<b>3.232</b>	<b>0.568</b>
<b>Valid N=184</b>							

The study findings outlined in Table 2 indicated that on average, the sampled county employees were in agreement that the county government leadership and management usually delegated some duties to their juniors as a way of empowering them to take up more challenging roles and responsibilities given the mean value of 3.837 and a standard deviation of 0.496. The county staff also on average agreed that the commitment of the county government leadership and management to developing human capital had significantly affected the county government's organizational

performance as demonstrated by the mean value of 3.783 and a standard deviation of 0.529. On average, the county staff neither agreed nor disagreed that the county government leadership and management encouraged the use of different types of skills to implement tasks, autonomy and feedback to help county staff improve their performance as shown by the mean of 3.457 and a standard deviation of 0.760. In the same vein, the county staff on average neither agreed nor disagreed that the county government leadership and management usually emphasized staff's

exposure to new and requisite skills and knowledge needed to effectively handle their daily tasks and responsibilities. This finding was supported by the computed mean value of 3.130 and a standard deviation of 1.147.

The study findings also revealed that on average, the county staff neither agreed nor disagreed the county government leadership and management had invested in tangible incentives for motivating staff to perform beyond expectations in their daily tasks and responsibilities given the calculated mean of responses of 2.880 and a standard deviation of 1.075. The study findings further showed that the county staff on average disagreed that the county government leadership and management always set aside adequate funds to facilitate the implementation of regular and continuous staff training programs tailored to address identified training needs as attested by the mean value of 2.304 and a standard deviation of 0.920. The overall mean of 3.232 and a standard deviation of 0.568 for the human capital development meant that on average, the county staff also neither agreed nor disagreed with most of the items presented on human capital

development in Wajir County Government. These findings also demonstrate that human capital development was not sufficiently undertaken in this county government since whereas some measures such as the delegation of duties and responsibilities was prioritized to a large extent, others like always setting aside adequate funds to facilitate the implementation of regular and continuous staff training programs tailored to address identified training needs received less attention based on the employees' feedback.

#### **Descriptive Analysis on Ethical Practices**

The study also sought to examine the influence of ethical practices on organizational performance in Wajir County Government in Kenya. Emphasis on ethical practices by the county leadership and management as part of strategic leadership in this county government was first explored by considering the responses of the sampled county staff with regard to nine (9) items on the ethical practices construct. The county staff stated the extent they agreed or disagreed with each of these items or statements. Table 3 outlines their responses.

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on Ethical Practices**

Item/ Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
The county government leadership and management emphasis on ethical practices has significantly affected organizational performance.	0.00%	0.00%	10.90%	89.10%	0.00%	3.891	0.312
The county government’s leadership and management always ensure that all county staffs uphold moral values in all operations.	0.00%	0.00%	16.30%	83.70%	0.00%	3.837	0.370
The county government leadership and management constantly clarify to all staff the ethical standards they must observe in their daily duties.	0.00%	10.90%	5.40%	83.70%	0.00%	3.728	0.646
The county government leadership and management continually encourage adherence to the recognized ethical codes of conduct and policies among all staff.	0.00%	5.40%	20.10%	74.50%	0.00%	3.690	0.569
The county government’s leadership and management have instilled a culture of strict adherence and compliance to ethical policies in all operations so as to cultivate the right organizational values.	0.00%	11.40%	12.00%	76.60%	0.00%	3.652	0.676
The county government’s leadership and management always emphasize on integrity where all county staff and other stakeholders are accountable, trustworthy and honest in their engagements.	0.00%	16.30%	5.40%	78.30%	0.00%	3.620	0.752
The county government’s leadership and management have managed to inculcate and maintain an ethical culture within the county government.	0.00%	15.20%	14.10%	70.70%	0.00%	3.554	0.745
The county government’s leadership and management is a good role model for their subordinates.	5.40%	38.00%	5.40%	51.10%	0.00%	3.022	1.056
The county government’s leadership and management always ensure that all county operations are run in a transparent manner by insisting on efficient information sharing.	10.90%	32.60%	16.30%	40.20%	0.00%	2.859	1.072
<b>Composite Mean and Standard deviation</b>						<b>3.539</b>	<b>0.464</b>
<b>Valid N=184</b>							

From Table 3, it was evident that the county staff on average agreed that the county government leadership and management emphasis on ethical practices had significantly affected organizational performance as illustrated by the mean value of 3.891 and a standard deviation of 0.312. The county staff also on average agreed that the county government’s leadership and management always

ensured that all county employees upheld moral values in all operations as depicted by the mean of responses of 3.837 and a standard deviation of

0.370. On average, the county employees were also in agreement that the county government leadership and management constantly clarified to



all staff the ethical standards they must observe in their daily duties (mean=3.728, std. deviation=0.646) and also continually encouraged adherence to the recognized ethical codes of conduct and policies among all staff as supported by the computed mean value of 3.690 and a standard deviation of 0.569. Similarly, the county staff on average agreed that the county government's leadership and management had instilled a culture of strict adherence and compliance to ethical policies in all county operations with the aim of cultivating the right organizational values. This observation was supported by the mean of responses of 3.652 and a standard deviation of 0.676 obtained from the analysis.

The county staff on average also agreed that the county government's leadership and management always emphasized on integrity ensuring that all county employees and other stakeholders were accountable, trustworthy and honest in their engagements (mean=3.620, std. deviation=0.752) and also had managed to inculcate and maintain an ethical culture within the county government as portrayed by the computed mean value of 3.554 and a standard deviation of 0.745. Nevertheless,

the county staff on average neither agreed nor disagreed that the county government's leadership and management was a good role model for their subordinates (mean=3.022, std. deviation=1.056) and also always ensured that all county operations were run in a transparent manner by insisting on efficient information sharing as confirmed by the mean value of 2.859 and a standard deviation of 1.072. Based on the composite mean value of 3.539 and a standard deviation of 0.464, it was inferred that on average, the county staff agreed with the statements on the ethical practices construct.

#### **Descriptive Analysis on Effective Organizational Culture**

The fourth objective of the study was to determine the influence of effective organizational culture on organizational performance in Wajir County Government in Kenya. To examine the extent effective organizational culture had been cultivated in this county government by the leadership and management, the sampled county employees were asked to react to six (6) items on the effective organizational culture construct. The county staff indicated the extent they agreed or disagreed with the statements presented to them and the findings are as presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics on Effective Organizational Culture**

Item/ Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
The commitment of the county government leadership and management to cultivating effective organizational culture has significantly affected organizational performance.	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.0%	0.00%	4.000	0.000
Staff members are always encouraged by the leadership and management to adopt positive team norms, common values, and behaviours that promote the development and effectiveness of the county government	0.00%	5.40%	6.50%	88.00%	0.00%	3.826	0.504
The county government's leadership and management usually inspire staff to share new ideas and opinions on the county government's operations.	0.00%	10.90%	0.00%	89.10%	0.00%	3.783	0.624
The county government's leadership and management has defined a clear and consistent set of values that govern the way operations and activities are conducted across all units to make them more consistent and predictable.	0.00%	10.90%	10.90%	78.30%	0.00%	3.674	0.663
The county government's leadership and management have ensured that attempts to create change within the county government are met with little resistance.	0.00%	3.60%	16.30%	70.10%	0.00%	3.565	0.721
The county government's leadership and management have always ensured that there is effective response to changes within the county government's environment by steering the continuous adoption of new and improved methods.	0.00%	19.00%	7.60%	73.40%	0.00%	3.543	0.795
<b>Composite Mean and Standard deviation</b>						<b>3.732</b>	<b>0.384</b>
<b>Valid N=184</b>							

The findings presented in Table 4 indicated that the county staff on average agreed that the commitment of the county government leadership and management to cultivating an effective organizational culture had significantly affected organizational performance as revealed by the mean of responses equal to 4.000 and a standard deviation of 0.000. The county staff also on average agreed that staff members were always encouraged by the leadership and management to adopt positive team norms, common values, and

behaviours that promoted the development and effectiveness of the county government as proved by the mean value of 3.826 and a standard deviation of 0.504. It was also established that the county staff on average agreed that the county government's leadership and management usually inspired staff to share new ideas and opinions on the county government's operations as confirmed by the mean of responses of 3.783 and a standard deviation of 0.624. Similarly, the county staff on average agreed that the county government's

management had defined a clear and consistent set of values that governed the way operations and activities were conducted across all units to make them more consistent and predictable given the computed mean of responses of 3.674 and a standard deviation of 0.663.

On average, the sampled county staff also agreed that the county government's leadership and management had ensured that attempts to create change within the county government were met with little resistance (mean=3.565, std. deviation=0.721) and also always ensured that there was effective response to changes within the county government's environment by steering the continuous adoption of new and improved methods as supported by the mean of responses of 3.543 and a standard deviation of 0.795. The composite mean value of 3.732 and a standard deviation of 0.384 for the construct demonstrated

that on average, the county staff agreed with the statements presented to them regarding the cultivation of effective organizational culture by the leadership and management in Wajir County Government. It also demonstrated that on average, the leadership and management in Wajir County Government had to a great extent attempted to create an effective organizational culture within the county government.

#### **Descriptive Analysis on Organizational Performance of Wajir County Government**

The study further assessed the organizational performance of the County Government of Wajir by considering the views of the sampled county staff. These employees were required to indicate the extent they agreed or disagreed with the various items in the organizational performance construct. Table 5 outlines the responses of the county staff.

**Table 5: Descriptive Statistics on Organizational Performance in Wajir County Government**

Item/ Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
Over time, the county administration has made considerable progress in mobilizing significant own source revenues.	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	34.80%	65.20%	4.652 0.478
The productivity of the county employees has significantly improved over the years.	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	51.10%	48.90%	4.489 0.501
The majority of county residents are contented and delighted with the quality of services provided by the county administration.	0.00%	19.00%	17.90%	63.00%	0.00%	3.440 0.794
The county government has performance contract targets in a satisfactory manner.	0.00%	27.20%	10.90%	62.00%	0.00%	3.348 0.880
The ability of the county government to pay pending bills on time has significantly improved over the years.	0.00%	77.20%	0.00%	20.10%	2.70%	2.484 0.905
<b>Composite Mean and Standard deviation</b>						<b>3.683 0.457</b>
<b>Valid N=184</b>						

As shown in Table 5, the county staff on average strongly agreed that over time, the Wajir County administration had made considerable progress in mobilizing significant own source revenues as affirmed by the obtained mean value of 4.652 and a standard deviation of 0.478. On the other hand,

the county staff on average agreed that the productivity of the county employees had significantly improved over the years as revealed by the calculated mean of responses of 4.489 and a standard deviation of 0.501. The findings also showed that on average, the sampled county staff

neither agreed nor disagreed that the majority of residents in Wajir County were contented and delighted with the quality of services provided by the county administration as shown by the mean of responses of 3.440 and a standard deviation of 0.794. The county staff also on average neither agreed nor disagreed that the county government had succeeded in meeting its performance contract targets in a satisfactory manner as confirmed by the mean of responses of 3.348 and a standard deviation of 0.880. The study findings further showed that the county staff on average disagreed that the ability of the county government to pay pending bills on time had significantly improved over the years given the mean of responses of 2.484 and a standard deviation of 0.905. The overall mean of 3.683 and a standard deviation of 0.457 for the organizational performance construct suggested that on average, the county staff agreed with most of the statements presented to them regarding the county government's organizational performance. The above findings suggested that the organizational performance in Wajir County Government varied based on the different performance indicators considered. Whereas mobilization of OSR and staff productivity had significantly improved over the years, other measures such as the ability of the county government to pay pending bills on time were wanting.

### **Correlation Analysis**

A test of correlation was conducted to determine if there was significant association or correlation between strategic direction, human capital development, ethical practices and effective organizational culture and organization performance in Wajir County Government. This test was important as it helped determine which independent variables needed to be included in the regression analysis. In this case, the Pearson's correlation coefficients ( $r$ ) and their corresponding significance ( $p$ ) values were computed. The focus in this analysis was the direction, strength and significance the correlations between each of the independent variables and the dependent variable. Padilla et al. (2019) provided a widely adopted criterion for interpreting the strength of correlations among variables as follows: +/- 0.00 to 0.19 meant very weak correlation, +/- 0.20 to 0.39 was a demonstration of weak correlation, +/- 0.40 to 0.59 implied a moderate correlation, while +/- 0.60 to 0.79 and +/- 0.80 to 1.00 indicated strong and very strong correlations respectively. The critical  $p$  value was set at the 0.05 level of significance where a  $p$  value less than 0.05 indicated that the correlation was significant, otherwise, insignificant. Table 6 outlines the correlation test results.

**Table 6: Correlation Test Results**

		<b>Organizational Performance</b>	<b>Strategic Direction</b>	<b>Human Capital Development</b>	<b>Ethical Practices</b>	<b>Effective Organizational Culture</b>
<b>Organizational Performance</b>	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
	N	184				
<b>Strategic Direction</b>	Pearson Correlation	.728**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000				
	N	184	184			
<b>Human Capital Development</b>	Pearson Correlation	.775**	.612**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000			
	N	184	184	184		
<b>Ethical Practices</b>	Pearson Correlation	.748**	.679**	.672**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000		
	N	184	184	184	184	
<b>Effective Organizational Culture</b>	Pearson Correlation	.736**	.586**	.677**	.659**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	184	184	184	184	184

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

The findings presented in Table 6 demonstrate that strategic direction and organizational performance in Wajir County Government were positively and significantly correlated as revealed by  $r=0.728$  and  $p=0.000$ . This correlation was deemed to be strong as per the criteria provided by Padilla et al. (2019). The study also established that a positive, strong and significant correlation existed between human capital development and organizational performance in Wajir County Government as illustrated by  $r=0.775$  and  $p=0.000$ . The correlation between ethical practices and organizational performance in Wajir County Government was also found to be positive, strong and significant as depicted by  $r=0.748$  and  $p=0.000$ . The study findings further showed that effective organizational culture was positively, strongly and significantly correlated with organizational

performance in Wajir County Government as confirmed by  $r=0.736$  and  $p=0.000$ . These findings in general, suggest that strategic direction, human capital development, ethical practices and effective organizational culture and organization performance in Wajir County Government changed in the same direction. Thus, it can be inferred that the correlation between strategic leadership and the organizational performance in Wajir County Government was positive, strong and significant.

#### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the study findings, it was concluded that strategic direction positively and significantly influenced organizational performance in Wajir County Government. The study also concluded that human capital development had a positive significant influence on organizational performance

in this county government. Another conclusion in this study was that, ethical practices positively and in significant manner, influenced organizational performance in Wajir County Government. The study also concluded that effective organizational culture positively and significantly influenced organizational performance in Wajir County Government. Overall, the study concluded that strategic leadership had a positive significant influence on organizational performance in Wajir County Government and hence, needed to be taken in to account when evaluating the factors likely to influence the county government's organizational performance.

The study recommends that the county government's leadership and management should hold regular and continuous open and consultative meetings with all county staff where the county government's mission, long-term vision, strategic goals and priorities as well as the county master plan are articulated or reiterated. In these meetings, the strategies needed to realize the set organizational performance objectives and targets and what is expected from each employee in terms of job performance should be clarified.

It is recommended that the chief officer and departmental head human resource department should lobby for incremental and adequate budgetary allocations towards the implementation of regular and continuous staff capacity building programs each financial year. These programs should target staff across all ranks as it had been noted that a large percentage of middle and lower cadre employees in the county government had not benefitted from such programs. Moreover, these programs should be relevant, ensuring that employees are exposed to new and requisite field skills and knowledge.

The county government's leadership and management through the HR department should also forge partnerships with willing institutions such as non-governmental organizations with the aim of expanding short term and specialized training and

other capacity building opportunities accorded to the county staff. In addition, sustained partnership with the Kenya School of Government is necessary in ensuring that holders of leadership and management positions in the county receive relevant trainings in strategic leadership.

It is also recommended that the county government's leadership and management through the HR department should invest in tangible monetary and non-monetary incentives that can be used to motivate and increase the morale of county employees towards enhanced job performance. Moreover, the departmental head should ensure that there is in place an established structure and system that govern the efficient and sustainable implementation of these incentives.

The study recommends that senior staff and supervisors within the county government should continuously endeavor to enrich the jobs of their subordinates by encouraging them to exploit diverse skills in implementing their tasks besides promoting autonomy and the provision of timely constructive performance feedback. The delegation of some duties to subordinates to empower them take up more challenging roles and responsibilities should also be sustained.

The study also recommends that the county government's leadership and management through the departmental heads and County Public Service Board should continuously communicate and create awareness on the moral and ethical standards employees must observe in their daily work engagements.

The county government's leadership and management should also use a combination of sanctions and incentives to inculcate and maintain an ethical culture in the county government by steering voluntary or enforced adherence to ethical codes of conduct, core values and laid down ethical policies and standards. Emphasis should be on promoting voluntary adherence and compliance with such policies, standards and values.

All the holders of leadership and management

positions in the county government should always act as role models to their subordinates by demonstrating ethical behaviour such as integrity, accountability, transparency, honesty and trustworthiness in all their undertakings.

The study recommends that the county government's leadership and management should be committed to employee involvement across all levels and units by holding consultative meetings where employees can share their views and ideas on key decisions, county processes and operations. Moreover, there should be emphasis on consistent set of values that govern the way operations and activities in the county government and effective strategies for responding to changes likely to affect the county government's operations communicated to all staff.

#### **Suggestions for Further Research**

The study suggests that a similar study which considers all the 47 county governments in Kenya can be undertaken in order to determine the extent strategic leadership has been embraced in different county governments. Studies which determine how organizational performance in Wajir County

Government is affected by other strategic leadership practices not considered in this study such as developing and implementing balanced organizational controls, building dynamic core competencies, investing in new technologies and engaging in valuable strategies are also recommended.

The study also recommends that studies which assess the effect of strategic leadership on other aspects such as employee engagement and performance, resource allocation, strategy implementation and strategic change in Wajir County Government can also be conducted. It is also suggested that studies that incorporate intervening variables when investigating the effect of strategic leadership on organizational performance in Wajir County Government should be considered. Studies that consider the effect of strategic leadership alongside other factors on organizational performance in Wajir County Government can also be undertaken. The study further recommends that studies that assess the different factors influencing strategic leadership in county governments in Kenya are also necessary.

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