

The effect of Staff competency in Strategy Implementation on Water Service Provision in Kakamega County, Kenya

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IJMSSSR 2022

VOLUME 4

ISSUE 1 JANUARY - FEBRUARY

ISSN: 2582 - 0265

Abstract: It is believed that implementation is the basis of success/failure of organizational goals. It accounts for rewards attained in efficient and effective resources mapping, distribution and utilization. Kakamega County Urban Water and Sanitation Company has recorded below requisite supply of water from its water resources. Like all water services, they operate with a strategic management plan. This study sought to establish the effects of strategic implementation on water service provision in Kakamega County, Kenya. The study was guided by the following objectives: Determine the effect of staff competency in strategy implementation on urban water service provision in Kakamega County. It was anchored on the systems theory and the resource-based theory. The study targeted 176 employees of Kakamega County and Urban Water Sanitation Company of out of whom 130 were selected using Krecjie and Morgan (1970). Mixed methods design was used to collect data with semi- structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data from the regular staff while interview guide was used to collect qualitative information from KII who were the senior managers. Data was analyzed with the help of computer supported software (SPSS) and presented using descriptive and inferential statistics techniques while qualitative results were presented thematically in prose. System Model and and Resource Based -Theory supported study variables. The study adopted multiple linear regression in testing hypothesis. The study revealed that staff competency in strategy implementation had a significant effect on water service provision in Kakamega County. The study recommends adoption of the competency-based strategic management model that allows for the use of human resource management efforts to plan, capture, develop and evaluate the competencies that are necessary to meet water service provision objectives at the different levels.

Keywords: Staff competency in strategy implementation; water service provision

Introduction

Back-ground to the Study

A strategic plan is a document that establishes the direction of an organization (Bungay, 2019). Strategy is a pattern for organizations to achieve their objectives and goals (Tapera, 2014). Strategy implementation happens to be a more challenging and delicate task than that of strategy formulation (Magiri, Ngui and Mathenge, 2018). To be competitive, organizations must therefore develop good strategies and appropriately realign the organizational structure, systems, leadership behavior and human resource policies (Kamau, Kibuine&Mugambi, 2018). Strategic management process is a continuous culture of appraisal that a business adopts to outdo the competitors (George, 2018). The process of strategic management includes goal setting, analysis, strategy formation, strategy implementation, and strategy monitoring (Bungay, 2019). Research integrating behavioural assumptions and real options models offers the potential to more rigorously explore how aspirations, bias, and various forms of uncertainty interplay in the strategic management process (Bryson, Lauren and David, 2018). The first part of strategic management is to plan and set goals (Ferlie and Edoardo, 2015).

Some of the key elements include empathy which is the caring individualized attention the firm provides its customers and assurance to build confidence (Magiri, Ngui&Mathenge, 2018). Also a firm should ensure there is consistent and good customer service with established communication channels (Ngile, 2015). Quality customer service delivery should be responsive and flexible to evolving user needs, and ensure sustainability, availability, timeliness, dependability and reliability (Aguoru, Umogbai&Ozowa, 2018). Water service provision is the fundamental aim of any water firm and the assessment of clients' satisfaction therefore forms an important component in continuous evaluation of water service provision run for the public hence the necessity of adequate

strategic plan implementation (Miruka, 2016).

The water services management in Kakamega County is overseen by Water Services Regulatory Board (WASREB). WASREB regulates water services in Kenya and enforces licencing conditions with Water Service Providers (WSPs), in this case Kakamega County Urban Water and Sanitation Company limited (KACUWASCO) (Devolution Hub, 2016). To compliment these efforts, Kenya Markets Trust (KMT) and Kenya Integrated Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (KIWASH) has been instrumental in assisting KACUWASCO at improving the water sector. However, major progress has only remained at the policy and legislation level; with maintenance issues resulting into below average water production thus creating a scarcity of clean water and poor service provision by KACUWASCO (Devolution Hub, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

The Water Services Providers in Kenya are presently observed to lack the capacity to equitably and sustainably supply water as envisioned in their mandate (WRMA, 2015). At the county levels, water access is expected to improve livelihoods (Karimi, 2018). Among the top 11 very large WSPs, Kakamega Water and Sanitation Company has the lowest number of active water connections standing at 31,518; which is much lower compared to neighbouring Kisumu Water and Sanitation Company that has 54,589 active water connections (WASREB, 2018). Moreover, Kakamega Water and Sanitation Company produces the least amount of water per cubic millimetre; standing at 5,573mm³ as compared to Gatundu Water and Sanitation Company that serves a smaller population but produces 7731mm³ of water (WASREB, 2018); thus demonstrating that there is inadequate water access to most households (Cofek, 2018). Consequently, this study sought to fill this gap by focusing on effects of Communication mode for strategy implementation on Urban Water Service Provision in Kakamega County, Kenya.

Reviewed Literature

Olivia (2017) conducted a desk review study on staff competency in Public-private partnerships for water in Asia the review covered two decades experience. It reviewed the development of public-private partnerships (PPP) in water services in Asia over the last two decades and situates the Asian experience within the wider global context. A comparative analysis of PPP data from two different sources, the study showed that 'qualified staff' had competency which enhanced strategy implementation. The study identified cyclical patterns of development of staff competency in the water sector across countries and the use of hybrid contractual and institutional arrangements for PPPs. Moreover, the study identified political risk as clearly playing a role in switching between supportive and critical attitudes to staff competency. However, the study did not focus on hybrid companies; yet hybrid companies might have more effective ways to manage staff, with regard to strategy implementation.

Kamaamia (2017) postulates that all constituent components of organizational culture including goal-oriented measures, work oriented measures, employee-oriented measures, open culture system, and professional work culture enhance organizational performance. Ahmed and Shafiq (2014) further highlight that all the dimensions of the culture influence the different perspective of organizational performance. According to Oduol (2015), for performance of firms to improve, present organization culture should be supportive and compatible with intended strategies and day to day running of activities of employees.

A study by Kipkorir and Daniel (2017) focused on strategy implementation and performance. The objectives were; to investigate the effect of resource allocation, role of staff involvement, influence of reward systems, effect of operating procedures and role of communication on performance. The study used McKinsey 7s model. The target population was 37 the organizations and 349 members of the management team. Stratified technique was used to categorize the management into Board of Governors, managing directors, managers and heads of departments/project officers. A sample size of 151 respondents was selected from the categories. Data was collected and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings indicated that Strategy operationalization through resource allocation and operating procedures affected performance to varying levels. The study also established that strategy institutionalization, through communication and reward system affected performance differently. The study concluded that strategy implementation moderately influenced organizational performance through operationalization and institutionalization strategies.

Theoretical Review of the Study

This study was anchored on the systems theory and the resource-based theory.

Systems Model

This theory was adopted since it stresses the internal factors like staff competence, financial resources and communication structures that is undeniably critical to augment strategy implementation and in turn have an effect on service delivery (Schermerhorn, Davidson and Woods 2004). This theory relates to this study since it focused on an organization as a group of units connecting to form an entire system and therefore the theory relates to adoption of strategic implementation and how it cascades through the entire organization. This relates to all the elements of strategy implementation outlined in this study.

The Resource-Based Theory

The applicability of this theory in this study is based on the notion that if a water service provider's strategy is implemented, then the WSP strategies can have an effect on the output or water service provision. This theory was relevant to this study as it emphasizes on the fact that resources internal to the firm such as human resource and financial resource are the principal drivers of a firm's strategy implementation and in turn have an effect on service provision

Research Methodology

This study adopted a mixed method. The combination of descriptive survey and co relational research designs in this study enabled the researcher to establish facts; examine relationships; describe, analyze and interpret data accordingly. The study targeted 176 staff of KACUWASCO. The study sampled 130 respondents using Krecjie and Morgan (1970) formulae. The study adopted both simple linear regression and multiple linear regressions. The sampling procedure that was adopted is illustrated in the table below.

Table 3.1: Sample size determination

Category	Population	Sample	Description
Senior managers	20	19	Krecjie and Morgan (1970)
Lower cadre staff	156	111	Krecjie and Morgan (1970)
Total	176	130	

A semi- structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data from the lower cadre staff. The questionnaires were preferred in this study because respondents of the study are assumed to be literate and quite able to answer questions asked adequately. The study adopted a key informant interview guide to collect data from the key informants also known as the senior managers. Mean and standard deviations were used as measures of central tendencies and dispersion respectively.

Study Findings and Interpretation

The study sought to analyze the response rate. Out of a total of 130 questionnaires distributed, only 115 questionnaires were fully filled and therefore suitable for data entry and analysis. Consequently, a response rate of 88.46% was achieved.

The study sought to determine the effect of staff competency in strategy implementation on water service provision in Kakamega County, Kenya. A five point Likert scale was used to measure the response indices such that; 1=Not at all; 2=Small extent; 3=Medium extent; 4=Large extent; 5=Very large extent. The findings based on quantitative analysis are displayed in table 4.11, table 4.12, table 4.13, table 4.14 and table 4.15.

Table 4.11 displays the descriptive statistics.

Table 4.11 Staff competency in strategic implementation			
Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Staff spearheading strategic implementation in the organization have adequate skills	115	2.8783	.91907
Staff spearheading strategic implementation in the organization have the required experience	115	3.4261	.79539
Staff spearheading strategic implementation in the organization have the adequate knowledge	115	3.4348	.82855
Staff spearheading strategic implementation in the organization have necessary qualifications	115	3.4348	.86987
Valid N (list wise)	115		
Composite Mean		3.2935	

Note. Researcher (2020)

When the respondents were asked if staff spearheading strategic implementation in the organization had adequate skills; a mean of 2.8783 was obtained; denoting medium extent. The interpretation of this finding is that staff spearheading strategic implementation in the organization had adequate skills to a medium extent.

The respondents were asked if staff spearheading strategic implementation in the organization had the required experience; a mean of 3.4261 was recorded; denoting medium extent. This finding depicts that staff spearheading strategic implementation in the organization had the required experience to a medium extent.

When the respondents were asked if staff spearheading strategic implementation in the organization had the adequate knowledge; a mean of 3.4348 was obtained; denoting medium extent. This result implies that staff spearheading strategic implementation in the organization had the adequate knowledge to a medium extent.

The respondents were asked if staff spearheading strategic implementation in the organization had necessary qualifications; a mean of 3.4348 was obtained; denoting medium extent. The interpretation of this result is that staff spearheading strategic implementation in the organization had necessary qualifications to a medium extent.

In summation, a composite mean of 3.2935 was obtained; denoting medium extent. The interpretation of this finding is that the staff competency in strategy implementation is to a medium extent in the water service provision sector in Kakamega County, Kenya.

Table 4.2 displays the results of the correlation analysis.

Table 4.2: Correlation coefficients for communication mode for strategic implementation and water service provision

		Communication Mode For Strategy Implementation	Water Service Provision
Communication Mode For Implementation	Pearson Correlation	1	.530
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.056
	Pearson Correlation	.530	1
Water Service Provision	Sig. (2-tailed)	.056	
	N	115	115

Source: Researcher (2020)

A correlation coefficient of 0.53 at a significance level of 0.056 was obtained for communication mode for strategic implementation and water service provision. This implies that indeed communication mode for strategic implementation is positively correlated to water service provision in Kakamega County, Kenya. Consequently, the study embarked on a regression analysis as shown below. A simple linear regression analysis for communication mode for strategic implementation and water service provision was done. Table 4.3, table 4.4 and table 4.5 displays the results of the regression analysis.

A correlation analysis for staff competency in strategy implementation and water service provision was done.

Table 4.12 displays the results of the correlation analysis.

Table 4.12: Correlation coefficients for staff competency in strategy implementation and water service provision			
		Water Service Provision	Staff Competency in Strategy Implementation
Water Service Provision	Pearson Correlation	1	.636
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.047
	N	115	115
Staff Competency in Strategy Implementation	Pearson Correlation	.636	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.047	
	N	115	115

Note. Researcher (2020)

A correlation coefficient of 0.636 at a significance level of 0.047 was obtained for staff competency in strategy implementation and water service provision. This implies that indeed staff competency in strategy implementation is positively correlated to water service provision in Kakamega County, Kenya. This results is comparable to that of Kipkorir and Daniel (2017) who established that staff involvement was positively affected by strategy implementation. Consequently, the study embarked on a regression analysis as shown below.

A simple linear regression analysis for staff competency in strategic implementation and water service provision was done. Table 4.13, table 4.14 and table 4.15 displays the results of the regression analysis.

Table 4.13 Regression model summary for staff competency in strategy implementation and water service provision

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.436 ^a	.519	.510	.63195

a. Predictors: (Constant), Staff Competency for Strategy Implementation

Note. Researcher (2020)

The study obtained a regression coefficient (R^2) of 0.519 denoting 51.9%. This implies that staff competency in strategy implementation accounted for a 51.9% change in water service provision in Kakamega County, Kenya. A 51.9% change is important since it is categorized to be above fifty percent and therefore very significant; a finding similar to that of Xun, Schuyler and Ravi (2016) who highlighted the importance of reform with regard to staff competency on strategy implementation in China.

Table 4.14 Analysis of variance for staff competency in strategy implementation and water service provision

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.852	1	.852	2.134	.047 ^b
	Residual	45.128	113	.399		

	Total	45.980	114			
a. Dependent Variable: Water Service Provision						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Staff Competency for Strategy Implementation						

Note. Researcher (2020)

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) results show an F value of 2.134 which is greater than f critical at a significance level of 0.05. Consequently, the model adopted was statistically significant. This finding implies that the regression model adopted for staff competency in strategy implementation and water service provision was statistically significant.

Table 4.15 Regression coefficients for staff competency in strategy implementation and water service provision

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.247	.358		9.058	.000
	Staff Competency in Strategy Implementation	.157	.107	.136	1.461	.047

a. Dependent Variable: Water Service Provision

Note. Researcher (2020)

The regression coefficients obtained resulted in the following equation/model:

$$Y = 3.247 + 0.157X_2 + 0.358$$

Since the model for hypothesis testing was:

$$\text{If: } p_2 < 0.05 \rightarrow \text{reject } H_{02}; \text{model: } Y = \alpha + \beta_2 X_2 + e$$

Then: $p_2 = 0.047$ which is less than 0.05 \rightarrow we thus reject H_{02} ; model: $Y = 3.247 + 0.157X_2 + 0.358$

In summary, the null hypothesis H_{02} is rejected and an alternative hypothesis stated as:

Staff competency in strategy implementation has a significant effect on water service provision in Kakamega County, Kenya. This result is supported by Kipkorir and Daniel (2017) who also established a significant positive effect of staff involvement in strategy implementation on service delivery.

Conclusion

The study was guided by the following hypothesis; **H₀₁**: Staff competency has no significant effect on water service provision in Kakamega County, Kenya. The null hypothesis was rejected and an alternative hypothesis stated. In conclusion, staff competency in strategy implementation had a significant effect on water service provision in Kakamega County, Kenya.

Recommendations

The study established that staff competency in strategy implementation had a significant effect on water service provision in Kakamega County, Kenya. Consequently, the study recommends adoption of the competency-based strategic management model that allows for the use of human resource management efforts to plan, capture, develop and evaluate the competencies that are necessary to meet water service provision objectives at the different levels. Hence, the study recommends the competency-based management model since it is aligned with the development of the competencies that are necessary to meet the strategic objectives of the organization.

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