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ROLE OF STRATEGIC CONTROL ON STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE OF PLANNED TREASURY PROJECTS IN THE COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF KAKAMEGA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project was to evaluate the role of strategic control on strategic performance of planned treasury projects in the County Government of Kakamega. The study adopted descriptive survey research design and targeted 145 respondents drawn from the County's department of Finance and Planning and from these, 125 respondents were proportionately selected for the study. Questionnaires were administered as the main instruments of collecting data from the respondents. Data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The outcome of the study was anticipated to benefit policy makers, management practitioners, and scholars in the area of strategic management specifically as far as County Treasury projects performance are concerned. A census was adopted to select respondents to participate in the study. Primary data was collected using structured questionnaires. Pilot testing was done and research instruments had Cronbach's alpha values 0.7 and above confirming their reliability. Data was analyzed using statistical package for social sciences version 24 and both descriptive and inferential analysis showed that strategic control role of middle level managers significantly influences Strategic perform of projects in Kakamega County since the null hypothesis was rejected. Its was recommended that county government of Kakamega should improve the level of involvement of every departmental member on strategy formulation and implementation process so as to realize better strategic performance of planned county treasury projects.

Key Word: *Strategic Control, Strategic Performance, Treasury Projects*

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INTRODUCTION

Modern organizations face significant shifts in the environment. Management strategy development and implementation is facing unprecedented change from the adoption of new technologies, new interfaces with customers and suppliers, and industry consolidation. Technological developments force companies to adopt new technologies and build new interfaces with customers and suppliers. Industry consolidation has increased pressure on senior management planning as the number of mergers and acquisitions grows. Company products are now becoming commodities. Competition for customers and resources is growing. Other globalization drivers such as competition, customer and cost (Yip, 2003) are forcing the evolution of global strategies by most companies. This pressure forces companies to change strategies. However, the success rate for strategic change programs may be as low as 30 percent (Balogun & Hailey, 2008).

The recognition in the research literature of middle management's importance to strategy began in the 1970s (Wooldridge et al., 2008). However, there is no universally accepted definition of a middle manager. Uyterhoeven (2000), for instance, characterizes the middle manager as one "who is responsible for a particular business unit at the intermediate level of corporate hierarchy". Furthermore, middle managers can be defined in a positional sense as "those below the general manager's executive team and above the level of supervisor" (Heckscher, 1995). Bower in 1970 was one of the first researchers to emphasize the contributions made by middle managers in the strategy making process. To underline their importance, he noted that middle managers "are the only men in the organization who are in a position to judge whether (strategic) issues are being considered in the proper context".

According to Nielsen (2013), strategic performance management is the procedure in which administrators and employees cooperate to plan, monitor and survey their employers work targets and their general commitment to the organization. As indicated by Armstrong and Baron (1998), performance management is the strategic and coordinated way to deal with increaseinthe effectiveness of organizations by enhancing the accomplishment of the general population thatwork in them and by building up the abilities of groups and individual contributors. Itis a continuous process for providing coaching and feedback, assessing progress and setting objectives to ensure employees meet their career goals and objectives.

Strategic performance management includes activities which ensure that goals are consistently being met in an effective and efficient manner. It can concentrate on the performance of an association, a division, worker, or even the procedures to assemble an item or projects, and several different zones (Vilkinas, Cartan, &Piron, 1994). The fundamental goal of strategic performance management is to promote and improve employee effectiveness. The process for linking a company's compensation plan to individual or team performance includes setting, measuring and rewarding achievable performance expectation (Kagaari, Munene, &Ntayi, 2010). Many people associate performance management with performance appraisal however this is a typical misguided judgment.

Anderson and Foss (2005) contends that strategic performance management is the term used to allude to activities, tools, processes, and programs that organizations make or apply to deal with the performance of individual workers, groups, department, and other hierarchical units inside their authoritative control. In contrast, performance appraisal refers to the appraisal of assessing or assessing performance amid a given performance period to decide how well employees, a vendor or an organizational unit has performed in respect to concurred destinations or objectives, and this is one and only of many imperative exercises inside the

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general idea of performance management (Mohrman and Cohen, 1995).

During recent decades, management research has paid particular attention to the importance of the involvement of middle managers in the conduct of organizations. Research has suggested that this involvement may add value not only to the implementation of strategy but also to its formulation. It is postulated that managers at all levels are being required to do more in spite of having scarce resources while coping with uncertainty and a rapid continuous pace of change. In the same breadth, it is noted that middle level managers play a critical role in the ultimate ability of a company to achieve its strategic goals (Pappas & Wooldridge, 2007). The authors note that program managers and marketing managers are some of middle level managers required to do more with limited resources. It is asserted that these managers are being held to account for the success of given projects even when they have no direct organizational authority over the same.

Devolution has been described by Merriam Webster (2017) as the transfer of powers, functions, authority and resources guided by the constitutional and legal provisions to lower levels of authority. Decentralization however is a broader term that enjoins devolution, delocalization, delegation and de-concentrating power, authority and resources. Cyprian (2015) established that the main drivers for the demand of devolution in Kenya were to facilitate development realization in the entire country and the transfer of functions. Devolution created three platforms; spurring social-economic development, democratic governance and guaranteed security for the people. The devolved governments' promise, in Kenya, to bring services to the people heightened the expectations of the people and hence the initiations of flagship projects and adoption of other government ran projects in many counties with the aim of spurring economic and social growth. During first term of the County Governments in Kenya (2013 -2017) and thereafter the governments have been under pressure from the citizens to demonstrate development results from the collected taxes, fulfil their political manifesto, electoral pledges and also the international commitments. The citizens have become more knowledgeable and demand transparency and a demonstration of the impacts of the County Government's intervention in improving their quality of life (PMCF, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

The introduction of the county governments in Kenya came with much expectation for accelerated infrastructural development. However, the full realization of these projects is still a question that most stakeholders are unable to come to terms with. Generally, the successful measure of a project is defined by completing it within specified cost, time, scope and quality. The need for successful completion of projects arises from the desire for the project to start serving its intended use and thus recouping the investment ploughed in. In the event that this is not realized, various outcomes play into such a reality. For instance, the cost of implementation will escalate and the capital will remain tied in such a project unutilized until it is completed. Recent management research and literature has thoroughly documented the importance of strategy execution of projects in creating corporate value. Sound execution is critical focus on making strategy work results in a healthy organization. However, the question is, if execution is so critically important, why aren't more organizations developing a disciplined approach to it? Simply because it's very difficult to do. Turning strategies into reality requires constant investment in management resources. It's particularly difficult in large or more complex organizations, where the distance between those who formulate strategy and those who carry it out can be significant. Research has revealed numerous barriers to effective strategy execution ranging from internal processes to poor resource allocation. However, focus is now turning to a critical element of strategy execution-the middle level manager. Little is known about the actual practices of middle managers (Rouleau, 2005) and how their activities can be facilitated (Balogun, 2007). Middle managers face challenges in strategy implementation Mayer and Smith (2007) conclude their role is often misunderstood and unsupported by top management. They do not define the new strategy. They function in a complex environment where they manage the relationship with top management and face questions and resistance from their teams. They often manage the relationships with internal and external stakeholders. They may face issues and constraints that are often not aligned to the new strategy. Previous studies have, however, not focused on the role of the middle manager on strategic performance of projects particularly in the public sector. This, therefore, motivated the present study to investigate the role of strategic control on strategic performance of planned treasury projects in the County Government of Kakamega.

Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study was to evaluate the role of strategic control on strategic performance of planned treasury projects in the County Government of Kakamega.

Research Hypothesis

H_{01}: Middle level manager's strategic control role does not significantly influence strategic performance of planned treasury projects in the County Government of Kakamega.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

Theory of Constraints (TOC)

The theory of constraints (TOC) is an overall management philosophy introduced by Eliyahu Goldratt in 1984 with the aim of helping organizations continually achieve their goals (Goldratt, 2004). The theory of constraints (TOC) is a management paradigm that views any manageable system as being limited in achieving more of its goals by a very small number of constraints. There is always at least one constraint, and TOC uses a focusing process to identify the constraint and restructure the rest of the organization around it. TOC adopts the common idiom "a chain is no stronger than its weakest link." This means that processes, organizations, etc., are vulnerable because the weakest person or part can always damage or break them or at least adversely affect the outcome (Linhares, 2009).

The underlying premise of the theory of constraints is that organizations can be measured and controlled by variations on three measures: throughput, operational expense, and inventory. Inventory is all the money that the system has invested in purchasing things which it intends to sell. Operational expense is all the money the system spends in order to turn inventory into throughput. Throughput is the rate at which the system generates money through sales (Gupta & Snyder, 2009). Before the goal itself can be reached, necessary conditions must first be met. These typically include safety, quality, legal obligations, etc. For most businesses, the goal itself is to make money.

However, for many organizations and non-profit businesses, making money is a necessary condition for pursuing the goal. Whether it is the goal or a necessary condition, understanding how to make sound financial decisions based on throughput, inventory, and operating expense is a critical requirement (Mukherjee & Chatterjee, 2007). In this case if couinty governments do not enhance the functions of the middle managers they are likely to perform according to "Middle managers" best as that would be the weakest link in the organization. This theory to examine the strategic role of the middle managers in the organization from the view point of constraints they introduce into the managerial system.

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Review of Variables

Strategic Control by Middle Level Managers and Project Performance

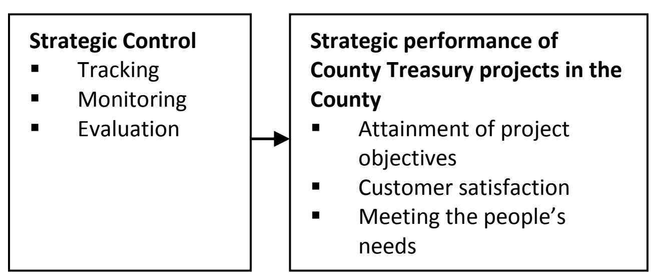
Control can be understood at multiple levels to mean various things. It can imply the exercise of influence, regulation, restraint, prevention, elimination, command and direction over behaviors, activities, tendencies or events. It implies testing or verification in science (Ndegwa, 2016). Strategic control is a term used to describe the process used by organizations to control the formation and execution of strategic plans; it is a specialized form of management control, and differs from other forms of management control - in particular from operational control - in respects of its need to handle uncertainty and ambiguity at various points in the control process (Micheli, Mura &Agliati, 2011).According toOkafor (2015), strategic control describes the process used by firms to control the formation and execution of strategic plans and it is a specialized form of management control which differs from other forms of management control in respect of its need to handle uncertainty and ambiguity at various points in the control process. It focuses on achievement of future goals rather than the evaluation of past performance.

Strategic controls are a critical component of the strategic management process and in particular the implementation process, as it involves tracking, monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the implemented strategies, as well as making any necessary adjustments and improvements where necessary (Livin, Sorina&Radu, 2008). Typically, strategic control systems (SCS) are viewed as tools of strategy implementation necessary to steer an organization through the changes that take place in response to the organization’s external and internal situations while providing feedback or feed forward to the strategy management process. They are formal target-setting, measurement, and feedback systems used by managers to evaluate whether a company is achieving desired behavior and implementing its strategy successfully (Kuye&Oghojafor, 2011).

Strategic control systems are influenced by an organization's internal and external situations of change and complexity. Fiegener (2007) noted that the relationship between the design and the effectiveness of strategic control depends on the environmental context. It is an ongoing evaluation activity that informs strategic adjustments and is itself modified to cater for changes in the environment (Thompson & Strickland, 2011). It involves qualitative assessments of a firm’s performance based on its objectives and competitive environment (Hoskisson et al, 2003). SCS are ongoing; monitor and measure short term and long-term sustainability objectives of a financial and non-financial nature; and provide feedback to the strategy management process.

Along these lines, the study carried out by Reginato (2010) found, among other things, an expressive connection between management controls and performance in industrial and services sectors. The study by Soutes (2006) identified that companies that use modern control tools perform better that those that use traditional tools. Junqueira et al., (2015) investigated the effect of generic strategic choices and management control systems (MCS) on the organizational performance of large and medium-sized companies located in Brazil.

Conceptual Framework



Independent variables Dependent variables

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Author (2019)

Empirical Literature Review

Engle et al., (2017) study on roles do middle managers play in implementation of innovative practices, found multiple areas where the components of middle managers' commitment to implementation of innovation drew on each other. For example, in order to sell innovation implementation to frontline staff, middle managers were influenced by synthesis and diffusion of information as well as meditation between the strategic and day-to-day tasks necessary to implement innovation. Another example prominent in our data was that in order for middle managers to diffuse information to staff they had to assess strategic and day-to-day tasks required for implementation, synthesize the information about implementation, and concurrently utilize selling of the implementation. Preliminary analyses of interview passages coded for multiple themes support these examples. Building on Birken and colleagues' theory, we posit that managers' influence is most effective when these components and our underlying emergent themes build on each other and do not occur in isolation (Alexander, 2008).

Further, Engel et al., (2017) study found that within the emergent themes, middle manager behavior was influenced by organization-wide implementation policies and practices. Although the general finding of links between behavior and context was not unexpected, our analyses provide new details about those dynamics. On the one hand, middle managers in all sites exhibited behaviors that facilitate the uptake of innovative practices and building of an improvement culture, a finding that has important implications for practice. For example, middle managers in all sites communicated pertinent information about organizational improvement efforts and culture to staff and provided staff with training related to those efforts (Barnas, 2011). However, middle managers in high change potential medical centers stood out from those in low change potential sites on a number of the themes identified.

In contrast with middle managers in low change potential sites, these middle managers generally took more initiative and were more interactive in carrying out the 14 emergent themes. These middle managers go a step further in interactions with staff, taking the initiative to support new practices and to engage staff in the change efforts (Conway & Clancy, 2010). Communication with staff was more active, interactive, and informal, with an emphasis on being multidirectional. Middle managers in these high change potential sites encouraged independent thinking in staff, while at the same time encouraging them to bring real improvement problems forward (Chuang, Jason & Morgan, 2011).

These middle managers not only train staff in using improvement tools but also mentor and coach them with real improvement-related examples until they fully understand and are ready to use these tools and skills (Kleinman& Dougherty, 2013). In addition, these middle managers serve as facilitators of improvement work, utilizing explicit structures and processes to facilitate staff buy-in and effective use of innovations. One component of this facilitation is working closely with staff to address barriers to improvement (Lukas et al., 2010). These middle manager actions appear to both facilitate implementation and reduce barriers to change and, thus, offer promising practices for middle managers seeking to facilitate the implementation of innovative improvement practices, as discussed in Practice Implications.

METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted in this study was descriptive survey research design. Descriptive survey research design is an efficient method for systematically collecting data from a broad spectrum of individuals. The target population for the present study comprised of 165 participant members for the 18 county treasury projects for the year 2017/2018 planning period in Finance and Economic Planning Department of the County Government of Kakamega. The sample size was proportionately sampled across the four County's Treasury departments. Data was obtained from primary sources using questionnaires and secondary sources. Data obtained from the questionnaires was first cleaned and edited before being coded and subjected to further analysis.

FINDINGS

Strategic control role of middle level managers

Table 1 showed the mean and standard deviation of the statements from respondents in relation to Strategic control role of middle level managers.

Table 1: Strategic control role of middle level managers

Statement	SA	A	UD	D	SD	MEAN	Standard deviation
I track strategic decisions made in our department for their full implementation	20	35	10	5		4.08	1.064
I ensure that all key decisions have a milestone to facilitate their timely implementation	30	38	2			4.35	.556
We ensure that Capacity building on Monitoring & Evaluation are done to increase access to our services	39	30	1			4.29	.848
We ensure that project development in our department have well defined monitoring points	20	39	2	5	4	4.09	.958
We have a standardized way of reporting the monitoring and evaluation exercise	25	38	5	2		3.04	1.328
There are regular trainings on Monitoring &Evaluation	5	10	5	30	20	4.08	1.064
The staff has a credible competency level on Monitoring &Evaluation	10	20	2	28	10	3.35	.556

The findings of the study indicated that the respondents that strongly agreed that the managers ensured that Capacity building on Monitoring & Evaluation were done to increase access to services (4.29) were many thus affecting the strategic project performance, majority agreed that the they ensured that all key decisions had a milestone to facilitate their timely implementation (4.35), while the respondents as well were uncertain on whether they had a standardized way of reporting the monitoring and evaluation exercise, this was attributed to inadequate training on monitoring and evaluation process.

Strategic Performance of projects

Table 2 showed the mean and standard deviation of the statements from respondents in relation to Strategic control role of middle level managers.

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Table 2: Strategic Performance of projects

Statement	SA	A	UD	D	SD	MEAN	Standard deviation
There has been an increase in newly funded projects in our department	5	10	5	30		2.29	1.229
All our projects are completed according to the set objectives	20	25		15	10	3.64	1.297
Our projects are completed within the time allocated	15	27	8	15	5	3.46	1.247
Our projects are completed within the budget allocation	30	25		10	5	3.93	1.289
Our clients are satisfied with the status of our projects once completed	30	37	3			4.39	.572
We give value for money on all our projects	32	28	5	5		4.24	.875
Our projects meet the clients' needs	30	35	3	2		4.33	.696
Positive impacts have been realized from our projects within the county	35	30	1	2		4.59	.883

The findings of the study indicate that the respondents (4.59) ,that strongly agreed that positive impact had been realized from projects within were thus affecting the strategic project performance in the county with majority agreeing that the clients are satisfied with the status of the projects once completed (4.33), on the other hand the respondents as well disagree that there had been an increase in new funded projects in our department, this was attributed to poor allocation of resources in the county.

These results was confirmed by the definition of strategic performance as the process for linking a company's compensation plan to individual or team performance includes setting, measuring and rewarding achievable performance expectation (Kagaari, Munene, &Ntayi, 2010) and the fundamental goal of strategic performance management is to promote and improve employee effectiveness.

Inferential Analysis

Linear regression results: strategic control role of middle managers

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.679[a]	.461	.957	.261

a. Predictors: (Constant), Strategic control role of middle level managers

Table 4: ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	105.944	1	105.944	1551.926	.000[b]
	Residual	4.642	68	.068		
	Total	110.586	69			

a. Dependent Variable: Strategic perform of projects

b. Predictors: (Constant), Strategic control role of middle level managers

Table 5: Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.061	.100		.611	.543
	Strategic control role of middle level managers	1.003	.025	.679	39.394	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Strategic perform of projects

Testing of Null Hypotheses

H_{01}: Middle level manager's strategic control role does not significantly influence strategic performance of projects in the County Government of Kakamega.

H_A: Middle level manager's strategic control role does significantly influence strategic performance of projects in the County Government of Kakamega

From the **T-test statistics results:** ($t = 6.333$; $p=0.000 < 0.05$) therefore the null hypothesis **H_{O1}** was rejected

Results interpretation: Middle level manager's strategic control role does significantly influence strategic performance of projects in the County Government of Kakamega. The result was supported by a research which established that Strategic controls are a critical component of the strategic management process and in particular the implementation process, as it involves tracking, monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the implemented strategies, as well as making any necessary adjustments and improvements where necessary (Livin, Sorina&Radu, 2008), and therefore involvement of middle managers can is critical as well in the implementation process.

SUMMARY

The findings of the study indicated that the respondents that strongly agree that the managers ensure that Capacity building on Monitoring & Evaluation are done to increase access to services (4.29) thus affecting the strategic performance of planned treasury projects, majority agree that the they ensure that all key decisions have a milestone to facilitate their timely implementation (4.35), there was need to frequent training on monitoring and evaluation process to enhance the efficiency of the staffs on monitoring and evaluation as a majority of the respondents as well disagreed to whether they have a standardized way of reporting the monitoring and evaluation exercise.

CONCLUSION

Existing empirical data confirmed that there was an expressive connection between management controls and strategic project performance. With respect to this, it was concluded that departments maintaining effective Strategic Control by Middle

Level Managers will definitely experience a positive project performance.

RECOMMENDATION

The county government should provide resources for middle managers at the treasury department for strategy formulation process, train the middle-level managers on the extensive use of technology in problem solving in the departments. This step would boost the middle-managers competence and credibility on problem solving techniques, thus they become more competent, self-confident and morale increase to their duties as they would feel fit to the duties assigned without the influence of the seniors.

Middle level managers should be free to exercise their actions without the influence of the top management. This would lead to job satisfaction and lowers absenteeism (Turner & Lawrence, 1965), facilitates creation, transfer and application of knowledge through the department, it also positively influences future performance of departmental initiatives

Suggestion for further Studies

The study recommended that more future research can further look into other aspects affecting the performance of middle level managers in the county government of Kakamega. Secondly, a similar study can be done in other counties in Kenya, to see access how effective involvement of the middle level managers in strategic project performance influences the county project development, realization of vision 2030.

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