

**EFFECT OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP PRACTICES ON THE PERFORMANCE OF  
THARAKA NITHI COUNTY GOVERNMENT**

**BY**

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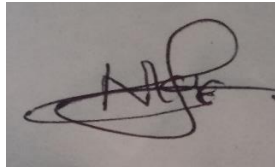
**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
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**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

**2022**

## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this research project is my original work and has not been submitted for an award at any university or institution of higher learning.



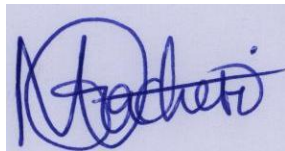
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This project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the University supervisor.



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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this project to my family and my parents who really love matters education and always pushing me to go beyond the limits.

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## **ABSTRACT**

One of the most critical aspects of leadership is strategic leadership. The concept of strategic leadership allow firms to engage in activities that involve sharing with employees a clear vision and set of shared values as well as the freedom to make decisions with the fewest restrictions from the firm. Strategic leadership support moral values, ethics and management from participatory and democratic models. Despite this, strategic leadership is not well developed among county governments in Kenya. The aim and objective of this study was to establish the influence of strategic leadership techniques on performance of the Tharaka Nithi County Government. The study was guided by resource-based theory and upper echelon theory. The study employed case study method and the population of the study were executives in Tharaka Nithi County. Primary data was collected using interview. The data was analyzed using qualitative models through content analysis method. The study findings reveal the county top management had adopted strategic leadership practices in their operations. Some of the strategic leadership practices adopted included the organization vision and mission, frameworks for teamwork and collaboration, ethical and moral leadership through its code of ethics, support to the employees by the leaders and strategic thinking. Strategic leadership promotes the performance of the County. The study recommends the need for moral and ethical management in the county to promote high performance and effective service delivery.



## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the study**

The governance and operations of companies around the world are changing in the modern era. One of the key aspects that companies are considering in promoting their success and performance is strategic leadership. According to Bhardwaj, Mishra and Jain (2021), strategic leadership promotes organization outcomes and performance in different levels. This is because strategic leadership practices involve application of multiple views and effective planning to help manage dynamic and complex business environment. Mubarak and Yusoff (2019) noted that managers that use strategic leadership practices in their major operations often witnessed changes in their organizational outcomes in terms of performance, commitment, staff retention and productivity. Thus, it can be stated that managers in all organizations must adopt strategic leadership approaches to re-invent their organizations in order to become appealing to achieve success, high performance, and results in the increasingly competitive and ever-changing world. This is necessary to cope with the fast changing environment in a globalized world.

Two key theories form the foundation of this investigation; the upper echelons theory and the resource-based theory. The resource-view explains that firms can enjoy good performance when they have unique and different resources from their rivals. The upper echelons theory, according to Mason (1984), is the concept that top executives see their circumstances through highly individual perspectives. The notion backs up the idea that a company's performance is largely dependent on the personalities, values, experiences, and other human characteristics of its top management team.

In Kenya, organizations including County Governments are increasingly realizing the importance of strategic management in their major operations. This is because it has been shown that the

adoption of strategic leadership practices results into new ways of doing things, high problem solving and generation of new solutions. With the strategic leadership skills, leaders can promote their firm success and productivity. County governments in Kenya support managers that have strategic leadership qualities and this has led to new changes in their operations. In Kenya, county government development initiatives currently contribute over 70% of the country GDP. Some of the Counties such as Tharaka Nithi County Government are among the top ten in terms of its contribution towards GDP per capita in Kenya and this is due to stable strategic leadership in the county.

### **1.1.1 Strategic Leadership Practices**

The concept of strategic leadership is viewed as the process that allow managers and leaders to inspire, motivate and influence the workers in firms (Ireland & Hitt, 1999). Thus according to Boal & Hooijberg (2001), this involves having the administrative acumen to recognize environmental opportunities. Also, according to Rowe and Nejad (2009), strategic leadership is an activity that involves sharing with employees a clear vision and set of shared values as well as the freedom to make decisions with the fewest restrictions from the firm. Moreover, Strand (2014), and Lord et al. (2016) refers it to the limited group of executives, who includes board of directors, top management teams, and the chief executive officers. They are usually in charge of an organization's entire operations. However, organizational leaders employ strategic leadership techniques to work with their subordinates and envision better companies in the future. By using strategic leadership techniques, leaders can develop strategic mission, commitments, and motivate productive strategic actions and execution (Kirimi and Minja, 2010). Additionally, strategic leadership makes it possible for leaders to control organizational resources, adapt to change, and handle strategic pressures (Collins, 2001).

Strategic leadership practices are one of the leadership aspects associated with potential success of an organization. This is because it helps leaders to successfully deal with change as well as to adopt effective strategy formulation and implementation process. Effective strategic leadership in an organization helps to manage high performance and also helps organizations to achieve and sustain a competitive advantage over its peers. A strategic leader is one who acts after carefully weighing the positions and options that could support the company's success (Semuel, Siagian, and Octavia 2017). An effective decision-maker is a feature used to describe a strategic leader who always makes the right choices and is naturally self-motivated (Mukhezakule & Tefera, 2019). Others believe that a manager who successfully interacts and connects with staff members while concentrating on project goals is a strategic leader. They also take calculated chances at predetermined intervals so that the risks taken only advance the goals of the company. Hence, strategic managers create plans that aid in establishing policies for the business.

By ensuring that the organization's objectives, values, mission, and vision are met and articulating these to employees, analysis demonstrates that strategic leadership practices assist leaders in upholding the organization future. According to Pearce, Robinson, and Mital (2007), strategic leadership techniques assist CEOs in defining the strategic goal and anticipated outcomes. The degree to which organizational leaders develop, convey, and oversee the execution of organizational strategy is used to measure this variable. By creating a culture of continuous improvement, strategic leaders put their attention on aligning practices, processes, and resources with the organization's plan.

### **1.1.2 Organization Performance**

The concept of performance implies the results or the outcome that an organization achieves after setting goals and objectives (Bhardwaj, Mishra & Jain, 2021). According to Omer, Sadq & Ahmed

(2017), performance may be set in terms of the goals and objectives of the organization. This is because performance is the expectation of what is to be delivered by an employee or a group of employees within a given time frame. This means that performance can be measured through the results or effort, tasks completed and quality of work as well as the specification of conditions of delivery.

Lear (2012) classified organization performance using either financial levels or other reward systems. The money motivation and performance aspects are subjective parameters that look at how efficient a firm uses its assets to generate revenues. Financial performance has also been generally used to stand for an organization's financial health within a specific period. In such a case, financial performance may be determined by the revenue generated from operations, cash flow from operations or operating income and the total unit sales (Carter & Greer, 2013). Generally, organizational performance describes how well or badly a company is doing both financially and non-financially. Employee morale, levels of customer happiness, and quality of the product or service are a few examples of non-financial performance measures. On the other hand, financial measures of performance include the company profitability, ROE, market share ROA, sales growth as well as the current ratios (Muia, 2017).

### **1.1.3 Tharaka Nithi County Government**

One of the forty-seven (47) counties established under Kenya's 2010 Constitution is Tharaka-Nithi County (Tharaka-Nithi County, 2022). The Tharaka, Mwimbi, Muthambi, and Chuka people, who are part of the greater Ameru community, call it home. It is situated in what was then Eastern Province of Kenya. Kitui to the east and south-east, Meru to the north and north-east, and Embu to the south and south-west are the counties that border Tharaka Nithi. The county is located

between longitude 370 19 and 370 46 East and latitude 000 07 and 000 26 South (Tharaka-Nithi County, 2022).

Five administrative sub-counties, which include Maara, Igambango'mbe, Chuka, Tharak South and Tharaka North, make up the County. In the county, there are three electoral districts; Maara Chuka/Igambang'ombe, and Tharaka (Tharaka-Nithi County, 2022). The county engages in a number of significant economic activities; these include raising goats and sheep in addition to other animals, coffee and tea planting producing subsistence crops and subsistence dairy products (Tharaka-Nithi County, 2022).

## **1.2 Research Problem**

One of the main forces for organizational change has been identified as the idea of strategic leadership. This is because strategic leadership is associated with the ability to motivate and anticipate changes in the environment. According to a study by Özer and Tınaztepe (2014), companies that have adopted strategic leadership have experienced high performance in their operations. This is due to the fact that strategic leaders are able to adapt to new environmental changes, manage, and solve issues arising in the organization. Additionally, the concept of strategic leadership is also associated with effective decision making and strategic collaborations. Olaka, Lewa and Kiriri (2017) contended that strategic leadership provides global firms with the ability to collaborate with other firms as well as the opportunity to improve their performance. Thus, it can be argued that strategic leadership helps firms to promote their productivity and performance levels.

The firm performance at Tharaka Nithi County Government has been declining as a result of various issues such as lack of commitment by some members, poor leadership interference, and

political issues. The county's brand image has suffered as a result of some of these external and internal organizational issues; this have led to poor efficiency and performance. It has been stated that to some extent the strategies chosen, the ineffective process of strategy execution, and the sort of top leadership, all have an impact on the organization's success. Nevertheless, it has been proven that implementing strategic leadership techniques may aid in promoting and enhancing an organization's success. An evidence-based study must be conducted to determine the impact of strategic leadership techniques on the performance of the Tharaka Nithi County Government given that there is no solid evidence to support this viewpoint.

The impacts of strategic leadership on the functioning of various companies throughout the world have been the subject of several studies. Hirschi and Jones (2009) conducted a study in the U.S on strategic leadership and how it influence business success. The study's findings revealed the crucial role that strategic leadership plays in any company's success. Strategic leadership is the epicenter of organizational operational success because it helps harmonize the different strategies because the plans are derived from various issues in the firm. The study came to the conclusion that strong strategic leadership improves business performance.

In UK, Akhtar, Kaur and Punjaisri (2017) evaluated the value chain systems that promote strategic leadership effectiveness in organizations and recognized that the capacity to inspire others, effective decision-making, and problem-solving are all characteristics of strategic leadership. Additionally, the study indicated that strategic leaders can predict changes in the external environment, which is crucial for controlling organizational performance. The study made the case that strategic leadership frameworks should be used by multinational corporations.

Further, Omer, Sadq, and Ahmed (2017) conducted an evaluation of the significance of strategic leadership practices in raising the level of organizational performance in Lebanon and discovered that these practices are crucial for coordinating the organization's future performance. However, this study focus only on telecommunication firms in the region. Despite this, it noted that strategic leaders can help solve problems within firms. Carter and Greer (2013) observed that strategic leadership is essential to successful strategy execution, which in turn promotes company performance, in their study to identify important plans and the business productivity in Pakistan. The study used a cross-sectional approach and found that organizations were becoming increasingly concerned about the rising risk of organizational failure. In order to track development and gauge the company's success, managers in organizations need to periodically update performance reports.

Kahiga (2017) examined the Kenyan National Bank to see how strategic leadership decisions affected competitive advantage locally. The study found that a strategic plan is the hallmark of achieving success in firms. It noted that firms should adopt strategic leadership in managing their organizations. Notably, Nyong'a and Maina (2019) conducted a study to evaluate the factors that impact strategic leadership success in companies. The study used a case study of the Kenya Revenue Authority and noted that adoption of collaborative management and change anticipation were core values within strategic leadership framework. In a research undertaken in 2017 to ascertain the impacts of strategic leadership on the performance of Kenyan banks, Kiriri (2017) discovered that strategic leadership had a favorable impact on the performance of the nation's banks. As a result, Kabetu and Iravo (2018) looked at how strategic leadership affects NGOs' performance in Kenya. They noted that strategic leadership is a key element for the success and performance of NGOs in the country and performance of International NGOs in the

country. Kitonga, Bichanga, and Muema (2016) examined the impacts of strategic leadership on the performance of County governments in Kenya. In their assessment of the topic they argued that strategic leadership has a beneficial impact on how well the governments perform. The study used a case study of Nairobi County in Kenya. Kising'u (2017) also studied Kenyan public and private universities to evaluate how strategic factors and issues can promote quality of services delivered by telecommunication companies. The inquiry reaffirmed the view that strategic parameters help achieve high-quality in all telecommunication firms in the country. However, some of these studies were done outside the country, while others were done using cross sectional design and were done in the past.

Based on the above analysis, one can argue that few studies been done to determine the relationship between the performance of County Governments and strategic leadership. Additionally, no research has been done explicitly to ascertain the connection between strategic leadership and Tharaka Nithi County Government performance. It is also evident that the majority of the past studies done related to the topic was done outside Kenya and used cross-sectional research design. However, this study will focus on Tharaka Nithi County Government and use case study method, thus filling the methodological and conceptual gaps. By offering research-based findings and providing an answer to the question, "What is the influence of strategic leadership practices on the performance of Tharaka Nithi County Government?" the study seeks to close the research gap.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

The objective of this study was to establish the influence of strategic leadership techniques influence the effectiveness of the Tharaka Nithi County Government.



#### **1.4 Value of the study**

The research's conclusions will advance academic knowledge on the relationship between organizational success and strategic leadership techniques. The results of this study will serve as a reference point for future researchers and academics since strategic leadership practice is one of the crucial fields of study and is relevant everywhere. This will support the advancement of the theoretical foundations needed to analyze how strategic leadership practices affect the performance of counties both locally in Kenya and internationally.

The study will also help various government agencies policy makers in the country to adopt, formulate and implement strategic leadership policies in guiding county government performance. This will help to address the challenges facing many county governments in country. This is because strategic leadership is strategic thinking, planning and long term development of resource power of organizations.

The study will help advance the field of strategic management. Several county governments will profit from the study's findings. The study would specifically assist Tharaka Nithi County Government in comprehending how strategic leadership approaches affect their success. It will help them to underscore how performance and success in the county can be achieved through the use strategic leadership practices. As such, the county will get the opportunity to improve their leadership strategies hence improve performance in their future operations.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, theories and empirical evidence on strategic leadership and organizational performance are presented. There is also knowledge gaps related to the study's issue based on earlier investigations. The theories guiding the study are also provided.

### **2.2 Theoretical Foundations**

The two theories guiding this study include resource-based theory and upper echelon theory. These theories depict how strategic leadership and performance measures relate in organizations. The resource-based theory focuses on the physical and human capital and how organizations can use them to achieve high performance and competitive advantage in their operations.

#### **2.2.1 Resource Based Theory**

Winefelt developed this concept in the latter part of 1990. According to Barney and Clark (2007), organizations look at the resources they possess and find ways of generating value from them. These resources could be physical, human, financial, institutional or organizational. When a company is generating greater economic value for the industry and other businesses are unable to imitate the advantages or strategy, it is considered to have sustained competitive advantage. The concept is an improvement of earlier studies that had been undertaken by researchers such as Porter (1980) who suggested that strategic development of an organization starts by understanding the general position of the organization in the industry in the form of environment, after which one assesses the strategy that would conveniently address the environment to maximize the performance of the organization.

This theory assumes that organizations have different resources. For organizations to enjoy high performance, the resources they have must be heterogeneous and are not perfectly mobile or the same across the firms. The strategic resources used by the firm must also be valuable, rare, difficult to imitate and cannot be substituted (Barney & Hesterly, 2012). Another important concept on RBV are capabilities of the organization, which is used in the theory to mean things the organization can do based on the resources at its disposal.

This theory is relevant in this study. This is because it outlines some of the strategic resources that organizations can use to improve their performance. Capabilities of an organization or firm are built with time as they are developed from actions undertaken on strategic resources. Poor organizational processes, procedure and policies may undermine a competitive advantage and lower performance and this may be arising from resources (Barney & Clark, 2007). The idea, however, overemphasizes on resources and ignores other organizational capacities.

### **2.2.2 Upper Echelon Theory**

Hambrick and Mason developed this concept in the latter part of 1984. This theory's key insight is that top executives' brains and ideas are replicated across their organizations (Hambrick and Mason, 1984). Top leadership's values and preferences will have an impact on how they assess the environment and decide on the best organization's strategy. Over time, the company begins to resemble the boss. Hambrick (2007) added two more moderators, executive job desire and management discretion to further strengthen the theory. According to the theory, a firm's performance is directly correlated with the amount of management discretion present. Employee

influence is more likely to occur under managers with greater discretion. The theory assumes that decision made by the top leaders influence the outcome and performance of the firms.

The top echelon concept and its later revision, however, do not account for the industry's ethical standards. The behaviors and views of senior management may not always reflect on how a company operates. In certain cases, the firm's practices and operations are determined by ethical concerns even when the leadership's traits stand in contrast to that (Vander Zee and Swagerman, 2009). In spite of this, the theory applies to the research; this is due to the way it portrays the idea that a company's senior executives are mostly responsible for its success. Effective and strong top leadership is crucial and may support the high performance of businesses. To be successful, businesses should make sure their top leadership is moral and diverse.

### **2.3 Strategic Leadership Practices and Organizational Performance**

The idea that a business is the deliberate pooling of resources with the aim of attaining a shared goal forms the basis of how organizations are thought of as performing (Richard, 2009). Only if the owner of the assets is satisfied with the value they receive in return compared to other uses for the assets will make them choose to pledge them to a company. The idea of value is therefore at the foundation of performance. The assets will be available to them as long as the company continues to produce value that is higher. As a result, the resource provider views the generation of value as the main measure for determining the firm's worth.

Strategic leadership enhances a company's success since the success of the company depends greatly on its ability to exercise effective leadership. A company's top manager is responsible for

the general management, marketing, and delivery of the company's goods and services in the early stages of business. The management places greater attention on developing a strategic direction as the business expands, giving other low-level employees the operational responsibilities. To achieve operational excellence and enhanced business growth, the management hires personnel with specialized capabilities. Sales revenue must expand through market and product diversity in order to achieve greater growth (Breene and Nunes, 2006). The manager is aware of the connection between value generation and competencies which affects a firm's success (Breen and Nunes, 2006).

The process of creating value entails transforming a notion about consumer needs into a clever arrangement of organizational techniques and skills that satisfies the needs at a reasonable price. A leader may encourage the management of talent and innovation by investing in training and development (Nel and Beudeker, 2009). A top performing business and culture go hand in hand rather frequently. By transforming the company and its operations to be optimized for having both long-term development and survival and at the same time short-term financial health, strategic leadership helps to increase performance (Lamb, 2009). Strategic leaders understand that failing to address the critical issues influenced by the unstable environment can result in organizational disaster if they focus just on the current circumstances (Lamb, 2009). A company can therefore strike a balance between immediate success and long-term viability. Strategic leaders devote a lot of effort into maintaining the health of this workforce because they view human capital as a crucial component in creativity and innovation (Harris, 2008). This is accomplished by maintaining existing resources and inventions while also looking for new ones that may be used to produce revenues.

The traits of a leader, a firm operational excellence, and a company's strategies are all related. When top management and owners are involved in choosing a direction for the company, performance naturally increases. The management's capacity to use the organization's resources while taking into account the existing and future environmental circumstances is the primary determinant in organizational effectiveness and strategic leadership (Ireland and Hitt, 2005). The capacity of a company to endure market adversities and establish a competitive edge in the market determines both its survival and greatness. If the management applies strategic leadership abilities to its operations, this may be accomplished.

#### **2.4 Empirical Studies and Research Gaps**

The effect of strategic leadership on the operation of organizations has been the subject of several studies. A research on entrepreneurial potential and strategic leadership for game change was undertaken in Spain by Abdelgawad et al. (2013). The study used a cross-sectional research approach and introduced the idea of entrepreneurial competence (EC) to describe a firm's ability to identify and seize opportunities while also coordinating their strategic actions and available resources to take advantage of them. According to Abdelgawad et al. (2013), strategic leadership is crucial for polishing a company's entrepreneurial competence and bringing it in line with its game-changing strategy. This can be done through establishing an organizational framework that makes it possible to modify the business ecosystem. The study concluded that entrepreneurial capability and strategic leadership is effective in promoting success and a competitive edge among companies. However, the research was done in Spain and it cannot apply fully in Kenya. It also relies so much on the concept of entrepreneurial capability.

Ellinger and Ellinger (2020) did a research on strategic leadership for learning; maximizing managerial coaching to create learning companies in the United States. They discovered that leaders' coach and mentor people they lead and this promotes company performance in the study, which used a survey questionnaire. The study concluded that one of the research's next approaches should be to look for the elusive actions that would turn an organization into a learning one. Additionally, it was clear that management must embrace diversity if it is to offer strategic leadership for learning. However, this study was done in the United States.

Kahwaji et al. (2020) conducted an additional study in Lebanon's educational sector to examine the effects of strategic leadership on core competencies and strategic performance. They employed a descriptive methodology and discovered that among teachers in the Lebanon educational system, there is a positive association between core competence, strategic performance, and strategic leadership. Core competency has a direct impact on strategic leadership, and strategic performance; this is according to the results of a study using a sample size of 106 observations. Strategy leadership, on the other hand, has not demonstrated a strong mediation function in influencing strategic performance through the core competency. Nonetheless, the study's primary emphasis is the Lebanon's education sector.

Business sustainability, strategic flexibility, and strategic leadership in Nigeria were identified by Nwachukwu and Vu (2020), where they discovered that strategic leadership promotes organizational strategic flexibility and enhances corporate sustainability. The study's employed regression analysis. Using contingency theory and dynamic capacity theory, a framework of hypotheses was constructed to focuses on strategic leadership, strategic flexibility and its

consequences for corporate sustainability. Survey data from Nigerian microfinance institutions was used in this study. The findings demonstrate that strategic leadership and flexibility are key contributors to corporate sustainability. Additionally, company sustainability parameters of environmental, social, economic, and innovation performance are highly influenced by strategic leadership and strategic flexibility. Lastly, the authors discovered that the influence of strategic leadership on company sustainability and related indicators was moderated. However, this study was done outside Kenya and focus on the banking industry in Nigeria.

A research on the impact of strategic leadership on the competitiveness of logistics enterprises in Kenya was undertaken by Muriithi and Kariuki (2022). Regression models were utilized in the study, and data from Kenyan logistics companies was gathered. The reaserch's foundations included capacity building theory, a resource-based view, and theories of leadership. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used in the analysis. A sample of 30 employees from each of the 65 Kenyan logistics companies that were targeted were given questionnaires to help collect primary data. With the help of the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), reliability was determined in the analysis stage. Further, u sing SPSS, quantitative data was examined in accordance with the study's goals. According to the findings, strategic leadership has a substantial impact on the competitiveness of businesses in Kenya's logistics industry. The study mainly concentrates on the Kenyan logistics business, despite its significant conclusions.



## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The chapter identifies the appropriate research procedures as well as methods that will be adopted for this study to respond to the research question. This includes; the research design, research participants, tools and methods of data collection as well as data analysis approach. The chapter also includes the data analysis tools that will be adopted after data collection to analyze the study findings.

### **3.2 Research Design**

Research design is the road map that help researcher to understand how they will evaluate, analyze and collect data in the field (Kothari, 2004). It gauges the research plan and covers the procedures that will be adopted. It is the conceptual arrangement within which a study is conducted. With a good design, the research can provide smooth sailing of the various aspects of the research operations thereby yielding maximum information with little resources hence saving time and money. It helps the researcher to organize his ideas in the form whereby it will be easy to locate inadequacies and flaws.

In this study, the research plans to use case study method. This is important since it will help to gain more insights on the topic of the study. This is because the researcher will only focus on one organization. With case study design, the researcher will be in a position to meet the research objectives within time and using the available resources.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

Primary data will be collected through the use of structured personal interviews which entail administration of the same context of questions to interviewees using an interview guide to enhance accuracy. The interview questions will relate to the topic of the study. This means that the questions will deal with strategic leadership and performance of the county.

The researcher will adopt face to face interview method. This will give the participants an opportunity to air their views, attitudes and opinions on the topic of the study. In addition, interview will allow the researcher to encourage the participants to provide honest and reliable data and help achieve the research objectives. Personal interviews provide great flexibility and opportunity for the interviewer to restructure the questions as well as control the questions which a person/s will answer or not. Telephone interviews maybe used to complement face-to-face interviews in situations where some respondents will not be reached due to geographical location or time constraints. The researcher will mainly interview 10 executives within Tharaka Nithi County.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

Data analysis is what guide the presentation of the findings since it shows the strengths of the linkage between the variables in the study. It entails summarizing and organizing data collected in a way that will address the research question (Kothari, 2004). This study will use content analysis technique to analyze the data collected. This technique entails use of a set of categorization to make useable and duplicable interpretations from data to their context (Baulcomb, 2003). The technique identifies unique features of the text in an objective and systematic manner.

The data collected will be checked for accuracy, correctness and completeness prior to analysis. Data obtained will undergo classification after editing to ensure they are free from errors. Since

content data analysis is deeply rooted in qualitative research methods, the emphasis will be on allowing categories to emerge out of the data being analyzed as well as understanding the context, viewpoints and perspectives of the participants on the topic of the study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This research aimed at underscoring the effect of strategic leadership practices on the performance of Tharaka Nithi County Government. Therefore, this chapter entails a presentation and an analysis of the data that was collected from the interviews that were conducted on the participants. The chapter then draws conclusions from the discussions of the findings with respect to the research objectives.

### **4.2 Participant Demographics**

The researcher interviewed 10 executives from the county Government of Tharaka Nithi and all of them positively responded to the interview questions. Out of the 10 executives interviewed, 6 were male and 4 were female. The selection of the interviewees was purposive to ensure a balance in the gender of the respondents with respect to the proportions of employees of each gender in the management structure of the county government. Therefore, the male represented 60% while the female represented 40% of the respondents.

The ages of the participants were also considered and the findings show that 5 executives were aged over 50, 3 were aged between 40 and 50 years while only 2 were aged below 40 years. In terms of educational levels, 8 out of the 10 respondents had acquired at least a Masters' degree and the remaining two had either Bachelors' degree or Higher Diploma. This points to the fact that executive positions and responsibilities require higher levels of academic achievement.

The researcher inquired the respondents' work experience in terms of how many years they have worked in their respective positions in the county government or in similar positions elsewhere.

The study established that a majority of the respondents had at least 5 years' experience in similar positions prior to their recruitment in the county government of Tharaka Nithi. Only two of the respondents had prior experience of less than 5 years. This explains why most of the executives are aged above 40 years since experience is an important requirement for recruitment in such positions.

### **4.3. Strategic Leadership Practices**

The interviews conducted aimed at establishing two aspects of the research; the strategic leadership practices used by the managers in Tharaka Nithi County Government, and the impact of those strategic leadership practices on the performance of the county government. After the participant demographics, the second section was aimed at establishing the strategic leadership practices.

The respondents enumerated a number of strategic leadership practices that they had adopted in their leadership practices. All the respondents noted that the organization had both the mission and vision, they also agreed that the organization had strategies to promote teamwork and collaboration among employees. Importantly, all the respondents agreed that there was a code of conduct and code of ethics for all employees which is aimed at guiding the employees in their activities within the organization. Out of the 10 respondents, 7 mentioned that there was supportive leadership in the county government of Tharaka Nithi.

#### **4.3.1 Setting the Organization Mission and Vision**

It was established that the county government of Tharaka Nithi had established the organization's mission and also had a vision that was known by all the employees of the county government. All the respondents were able to cite the mission of the county government: *To Enhance sustainable socio-economic growth and optimal utilization of resources*. All the respondents were also able to cite the county government vision: *To be a prosperous, industrialized and cohesive county*. More than half of the respondents were able to enumerate the core values of the government to include integrity, inclusiveness, citizen focused, creativity and innovativeness, transparency and accountability and teamwork. Therefore, the county government of Tharaka Nithi has put in place both mission and vision as strategic leadership tools to guide the operations of the organization.

#### **4.3.2 Teamwork and Collaborations**

The respondents were asked to explain whether the county government had put in place measures to enhance teamwork and collaboration among its employees and to explain the extent to which teamwork and collaboration is used in the organization. All the respondents affirmed that the county government promoted teamwork and collaboration as one of its core values. However, only half of the respondents said that the strategy had been used effectively. They noted that some departments within the organization were not promoting teamwork and collaboration as should be done. Therefore, teamwork and collaboration as leadership strategy was only used by some leaders and not all leaders; this is explained by the differences in performance among the different departments of the county government.

#### **4.3.3 Ethical and Moral Management**

The respondents were asked to state whether the management in the organization employed ethics and morality in their management. All the respondents, being managers stated that they adhered to the code of ethics of the county government and that they all practiced moral management.

However, when asked about other leaders in the organization, 3 respondents said that some of the leaders in the company were doing their activities in breach of the code of ethics and that some were corrupt. From these findings, it can be stated that Tharaka Nithi County Government leadership engaged ethical and moral management to a large extent and that only a few of the managers were unethical

#### **4.3.4 Supportive Leadership**

Regarding supporting employees, the respondents were asked to state whether they supported their employees to effectively work in the organization. They were also asked to state the extent to which the leaders in the organization supported other employees in their work. All the respondents said that they supported their juniors both to meet the organizational requirements as well as offering support on other personal issues. However, when asked if the organization had a structure or framework upon which the leaders are compelled to support their subordinates to effectively perform their duties, all responded that support for employees depended on individual leaders and that some leaders were not keen on supporting their followers.

#### **4.3.5 Strategic Thinking**

When asked if they employed strategic thinking in their decision-making processes as well as in management of resources in the organization, all the respondents said that strategic thinking was key to making sustainable decisions and that the leaders in the organization engaged strategic thinking in their work. They however alluded that strategic thinking is an aspect of leadership that is innate in individuals and may vary among the leaders. Generally, all agreed that most of the leaders in Tharaka Nithi County Government were strategic thinkers.

#### **4.4 Organizational Performance**

In order to underscore performance in the organization, the researcher sought to establish the parameters considered as performance measures by the respondents. The respondents stated that performance measures used in their organization included the quality of services offered, public satisfaction, reliability of the services offered and the efficiency through which the services are provided to the citizens. The respondents also noted that they measure financial performance in terms of the return on investment made and income or revenue generated by the county projects. According to most of the respondents, their organization would be performing well if the citizens were satisfied with the services offered; this would be underscored through public participation where citizens have time to give their opinions. Also, their organization would be performing well if the resources (both financial and non-financial) were utilized effectively to provide services efficiently. The respondents also asserted that performance should be measured in terms of the quality of services offered by various departments, for instance the turn-out time for service provision is an important measure of efficiency and quality.

#### **4.5 Strategic Leadership Practices and Performance of Tharaka Nithi County Government**

The respondents were asked to explain whether the strategic leadership practices they had mentioned impacted the performance of the county government based on the performance measurements they had identified. They all agreed that the vision and mission of the organization provided a framework upon which each employee of the county government based his or her actions. All the employees worked to fulfil the mission of the county government; this enhances unity of purpose thus promoting performance. Most of the employees of the organization embraced



teamwork and collaboration as stated by the respondents. According to the executives, teamwork and cooperation has increased service delivery efficiency in the county government in some departments; in the departments where teamwork and collaboration lacked, the respondents noted that service delivery was slow and basically impaired. Likewise, it was noted that the departments where collaboration and teamwork were practiced, the quality of services were higher and thus enhanced customer satisfaction.

The respondents agreed that ethics and moral leadership is critical for the success of any organization. They noted that in the county Government of Tharaka Nithi, the departments or ministries in which the leaders were known to be ethical and moral were performing better than others. On supportive leadership, the respondents noted that without supportive leadership, employees fail to perform to their best. One respondent noted that an employee cannot work effectively if she has problems at home and which the leaders can help address. They also noted that most subordinates require continuous guidance on how work should be done and thus the need for supportive leadership. Additionally, all the respondents pointed out that direct motivation from the leaders to the support staff plays an important role in promoting performance of individuals.

Generally, it has been established that in the ministries and departments which were headed by friendly, reachable and social leaders performed better in terms of service efficiency, offering of high quality services and customer satisfaction. All the respondents asserted that strategic thinking is critical for successful leadership in organizations. Each of the executive explain how strategic thinking helped them to make decisions that were beneficial to the organization. They also noted that strategic thinking is important when handling human resources if they have to be kept motivated throughout. Therefore, all of the respondents said that strategic thinking had impacted their performance of their individual departments through enhancing service reliability and

efficiency. They also noted that it was through strategic thinking of the leadership that made some ministries to perform well in terms of provision of quality services than others.

#### **4.6 Discussions of the Findings**

This study has established that the County Government of Tharaka Nithi had put in place strategic leadership practices which include the organization vision and mission, frameworks for teamwork and collaboration, ethical and moral leadership through its code of ethics, support to the employees by the leaders and strategic thinking. This agrees with Rowe and Nejad (2009) who established that strategic leadership is an activity that involves sharing with employees a clear vision and set of shared values as well as the freedom to make decisions with the fewest restrictions from the firm.

The county government's mission and vision should provide clarity on what the organization is about and what it intends to be to the employees who can then follow the mission without supervision. Also, the findings concur with Ireland and Hitt (1999) who noted that strategic leadership is the leadership process that allow managers and leaders to inspire, motivate and influence the workers in firms. Likewise, the findings are in tandem with Carter and Greer (2013) who observed in their study to identify important plans and the business productivity in Pakistan, that strategic leadership is essential to successful strategy execution, which in turn promotes company performance.

However, it is clear that not all the departments or ministries in the organization applied these strategies equally. The aim of the study was to underscore the impact of strategic leadership practices on performance of the county government. The findings have shown that performance of

the county government could be measured through the quality of services offered, efficiency of the departments in offering the services, and customer satisfaction.

This study's findings on supporting employees agree with Akhtar, Kaur and Punjaisri (2017) who evaluated the value chain systems that promote strategic leadership effectiveness in organizations and recognized that the capacity to inspire others, effective decision-making, and problem-solving are all characteristics of strategic leadership which have positive impact on performance. Therefore, when measured using these parameters, the respondents alluded that in all the departments where strategic thinking, teamwork and collaboration, ethical management and supportive leadership were practiced, the performance improved in terms of service efficiency, quality of services and customer satisfaction. Likewise, these findings point to Hirschi and Jones (2009) study which established that strategic leadership is the epicentre of organizational operational success because it helps harmonize the different strategies since the plans are derived from various issues in the firm.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides the summary of the study findings as well as the conclusions that is drawn from those findings. Additionally, the chapter explores the whole research methodologies and design by looking into the limitations and thus provides recommendations for practice and for future research.

### **5.2 Summary of the Findings**

This study established that Tharaka Nithi County Government has an organizational mission and vision which are well spelt and known to all the employees; the employees are always reminded to work towards achieving the vision and the mission. This is an important leadership strategy that has been established to provide order and unity of purpose among the employees thus increasing efficiency in service delivery.

The study also established that there exist concepts of teamwork and collaboration in most departments in the organization except a few and it has been noted that the departments that were keen on teamwork and collaboration performed better in terms of service delivery and enhanced quality services. Also, the study has established that most of the leaders in the organization practiced ethical and moral conduct as stipulated in the organization's code of conduct. However, a few of the leaders have been found to engage in unethical acts such as corruption.

Nonetheless, the study found out that the departments whose leaders were morally upright enjoyed better performance in terms of customer satisfaction. The study also found out that some departmental leaders in the organization offered supportive leadership to their followers.

Supportive leadership offered ranged from work-related to non-work related such as personal assistance. The study noted that such support enhanced employee motivation which eventually translated into production of quality service and consequent customer satisfaction. The idea of strategic thinking as a way of strategic leadership was only found among a few respondents and these respondents emphasized the need for such characteristic, stating that it enhanced decision-making and thus helped improve performance in the organization.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

This study aimed at establishing the impact of strategic leadership on performance of organizations. Specifically, the study has empirically examined organizational performance of Tharaka Nithi County Government as impacted by strategic leadership exhibited by its top management. By using the case study design, the researcher was able to gain detailed insights on each of the parameters sought by the research question. The study sampled 10 directors from different departments and ministries of the county government and each of the directors was subjected to face to face interview with the researcher. The interview questions given to the respondents related to the topic in question and this was achieved by the use of an interview guide.

Through content analysis, the collected data was collated into sets and categories based on themes to identify unique features of each response. From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that strategic leadership in organizations play an important role in enhancing organizational performance. It is important that the management of county promote adoption of strategic leadership framework in their operations and activities.

### **5.4 Limitations**

This study is limited by the fact that it is a case study and thus the findings may not be appropriately applicable to other county governments as well as other organizations. The setting and the dynamics of Tharaka Nithi county government may be different from those of other organizations thus the findings may not be generalized easily. Additionally, apart from the study being limited in scope by being restricted to only one organization, only four dimensions of strategic leadership were considered during the study.

The study used interview guide which is limited to few questions and respondents. However, the researcher tried to engage as many respondents as possible to get huge data during the study. It is imperative that future studies embrace non-interview methods. This will help generate huge data which is important in understanding the study variables.

## **5.5 Recommendations**

The study established that strategic leadership is critical for organizational performance. It has shown that each strategic leadership practices have an impact on specific aspects or measure of performance. Therefore, organizations seeking to increase efficiency and enhance performance should strive to have in place measures to ensure that the managers employ strategic leadership. Also, this study has shown that teamwork and collaboration enhances performance just like morality and ethical presentations of the leader impact organizations positively in terms of performance. The important role of support to the employees has not been understated as it has been shown that employees who are supported appropriately give their best at work thus enhancing

performance. Therefore, organizations should enlighten their leaders on the importance of supporting the subordinates both at work and any other necessary support to keep them motivated.

The study confirmed that ethics and morality have been shown to play an important role in promoting performance of the county government since the ministries that were transparent and accountable performed better in terms of the quality of services and customer satisfaction. Therefore, county governments as well as the national governments and other NGOs should strive to have moral leaders who adhere to the code of ethics of the organization.

Likewise, county governments and other organizations should strive to eliminate corrupt and immoral leaders from their positions to gain trust of the customers. Without corruption, the county can achieve effective development, high performance and effective services delivery. This is the essence of leadership in the region.

### **5.5. Suggestions for Future Research**

Future studies should strive to have a larger response base from diversified county governments to factor in the issues of variability. Similar studies should strive to underscore the level of impact that each of the strategic leadership practices have on both financial and non-financial performance. This implies that future studies can quantitatively determine the specific effect of these leadership strategies practices on organizational performance. Future studies should also make use of secondary data to support the primary data collected.

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## APPENDIX

### Appendix: Interview Guide

The objective of this study is to determine the effect of strategic leadership practices on the performance of Tharaka Nithi County Government.

1. What is your current position within the Tharaka Nithi County Government?
2. Which department do you head at Tharaka Nithi County Government?
3. How many years have you worked at Tharaka Nithi County Government?
4. What are some of the strategic leadership practices adopted by Tharaka Nithi County Government?
5. To what extent has the Tharaka Nithi County Government implemented the following strategic leadership practices to promote its performance?
  - i. Setting the company mission and vision
  - ii. Teamwork and collaborations
  - iii. Ethical and moral management
  - iv. Supportive leadership
  - v. Strategic thinking
6. What are the performance measures that Tharaka Nithi County Government has implemented to achieve its set plans and goals?
7. To what extent has the Tharaka Nithi County Government implemented the below performance measures in their operations?
  - i. Service efficiency
  - ii. High quality services

iii. Service reliability

iv. Customer satisfaction

8. In your view, how have strategic leadership practices influenced the performance of Tharaka Nithi County Government? Explain.
9. What are some of the strategic leadership practices that you can suggest the Tharaka Nithi County Government to adopt so as to promote its performance?

**THANK YOU**