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INFLUENCE OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP PRACTICES ON ORGANIZATION PERFORMANCE OF TELECOMMUNICATION FIRMS IN NAIROBI CITY COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The study was on the influence of strategic leadership practices on organization performance of telecommunication service firms in Nairobi city, Kenya. The study was guided by the following specific objectives: To examine the influence of rate of human capital development on organization performance of telecommunication firms in Nairobi City, Kenya. To establish the influence of rate of operational efficacy on organization performance of telecommunication firms in Nairobi City, Kenya, and to assess the influence of strategic control levels on the organization performance of telecommunication firms in Nairobi City, Kenya. The study was anchored on trait leadership theory, the organizational development theory, and strategic leadership theory. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design. The target population was tier one of three telecommunication firms in Kenya. The unit of observation was 650 management staff in upper and middle levels. Stratified sampling method was employed in picking the sample size of 195 of which simple random sampling was further used in each stratum to pick on the desired sample as explained. Data was collected through a survey instrument (structured questionnaires). Content validity was used in order to get the accuracy of the research data instrument. A pilot study was conducted in Nakuru City County, where 20 questionnaires were given out to management staff in telecommunication firms, representing 10% of the sample size. The data collected was scrutinized, coded, and keyed into SPSS version 29 for analysis. Descriptive statistics included percentage, mean, and standard deviation, and inferential statistics were employed. The study findings revealed that rate of human capacity development had a P=.000, which is within the significance level of 0.05. This implies a very strong relationship between it and the dependent variable. Secondly, the rate of operational efficacy had a P=.000, still connoting a very strong relationship between it and the organization performance of telecommunication firms. Finally, the rate strategic control systems scored a P value=.003, which is also within the significance level of 0.05 connoting a strong relationship with the dependent variable under study. This therefore, means that strategic leadership practices hugely influence organization performance.

Key Words: *Strategic Leadership Practices, Rate of Human Capital Development, Rate of Operational Efficacy, Rate of Strategic Control Systems, Team Work, Organization Performance.*

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a key determinant of organization success. Future of businesses depends managers' ability to adopt strategic leadership practices (Zgarni & Gharbi, 2021). Strategic leadership practices are specific managerial practices that earns a company a competitive advantage. They include setting realistic goals, setting a culture that enhances adoption of strategic changes and teamwork, strategically controlling organization resources, and leading by example (Lesage, 2019). Lorette (2016) added that strategic leadership practices are tactics adopted by strategic leaders to influence others in making decisions willingly that impact on the long-term success of an organization. Porter (1985) is assertive that firms can achieve sustainable competitive advantage through cost leadership, differentiation and focus. Accordingly, firms have to identify strategic factors within the organization that improve their ability to produce goods or services that are better than the competition. In theory, firms can sustain competitive advantage by reconfiguring how they exploit a set of internal resources such as knowledge and relationships to produce better products and services. This relationship has also been established empirically.

Barney (1991) considers leaders to be instrumental to how organizations operate. Miharja and Hayati (2021) found a link between visionary leadership, talent management and realization of long-term goals. According to Faeq, Garanti and Sadq (2021), strategic leadership capacity is critical to inspiring employees to work harder, and determines the degree of employee empowerment within an organization. Lisdiono, Said, Yusoff and Hermawan (2022) suggest that leadership is one of the critical components of the strategic management framework that enable firms realize strategic goals. Worlu, Osibanjo, and Falola (2021) argue that strategic direction, communication, and managerial skills of leaders have a significant impact on firm survival.

The most important aspect of strategic leadership is identifying the company's mission or vision (Golensky & Hager, 2020). Nahak and Ellitan (2022) asserted that strategic leadership includes the ability to anticipate, have vision, and maintaining flexibility, empowering people others to create the necessary strategic changes. This strategy has important effect on the organization's efforts to gain competitiveness strategically and earn above-average profits. Leadership effective strategy is needed to formulate and implement strategy successfully. In England, the strategic leadership focuses on the transfer of substantial tasks and functions from central government to the lower levels of government (Gong, Liu & Wu, 2021). This is manifested by enhancing the functions and roles of the lower level of government, which remains a central government, in the same line of the department.

Rowe (2019) shows that strategic leaders exhibit a synergy of managerial competencies and skills which play critical role in the short term and long term strategic positioning which ultimately ensures superior performance within the firm. These competencies enable harnessing of organizational resources to achieve set performance. The improvement of strategic leadership enhances transparency and openness of organisations (Busch, Kapur, & Mukherjee, 2020).

Every firm in Africa strives for effective production or service delivery as a competitive advantage in order to please her valued clients. Creating a competitive advantage necessitates well-designed leadership that propels the business toward its objectives. The top-down, vision-oriented process of strategic leadership starts with the leader as a change agent analyzing the situation and making decisions on the most appropriate options for conducting business transactions to attain set objectives goals and organization performance. (Chikwe, Anyanwu, & Edeja, 2016).

The business environment is highly dynamic and digital technologies have revolutionized how businesses compete on a global level. Recent developments in communication technology have exacerbated the change witnessed in the telecommunications' sector which is expected to lead the way in adoption of emerging technologies that facilitate communication (Chen, Li, & Chen, 2021). In this regard, apart from being expected to predict future trends and customer expectations, they also have to spot opportunities that may emerge and avoid the risks associated with championing new products and services. This calls for well thought-out and informed decision making. According to resource-based view models, a firm's ability to transform its business environment in response to the changing needs of the operating environment is a core competency and a source of competitive advantage that advances business survival ambitions (Božič & Dimovski, 2019). Teece et al. (1997) stress the importance of determining sources of competitive advantage and uniqueness in their composition on organizational resources.

In today's dynamic, uncertain and highly competitive global markets, organizations are facing increased pressure to offer unique products and services. The telecommunications sector has, in particular, witnessed significant growth and competitiveness, with companies seeking to meet demands for cheaper and faster services. Wasono and Furinto (2018) show increased investment in 5G technologies, mobile phone owners, demand for high-speed internet connectivity and associated value-added services, with companies in the sector being expected to have a compound annual growth rate of 6.2% between 2023 and 2030. Product offering has also shifted from audio to video, automated and cloud services and according to Yu, Wang and Moon (2022), telecommunication firms have reacted to such changes by restructuring their internal environment to increase their ability to become more innovative and competitive. In a world of ever diminishing resources and increased innovation, failure to exploit internal resources and competencies in a strategic manner is the main source of business failure (Quagraine, et al., 2021). This study seeks to examine the impact of these capabilities on the performance of firms in Kenya's telecommunications' sector.

The telecommunications sector is predominantly regulated by the Communication Authority of Kenya (CA), other government authorities are also involved in the set-up and regulation of a business in the sector. Understanding the interplay between these regulators may be difficult, and some regulatory requirements may be inadvertently overlooked. Hence the need for strategic leadership capabilities. Additionally, the telecommunications' sector is highly competitive and the composition of factors that influence their performance can change (Quagraine, et al., 2021). The telecommunication firms in Kenya have been facing performance challenges mainly due to high competition in the market. According to the last quarter report (CA, 2020), Safaricom PLC and Equitel recorded losses of 0.3% and 0.1 % in market shares in mobile subscription respectively. Safaricom market share decreased by 5.4%. Telkom has shut down almost 90% of its mobile money agent network due to loss of subscribers. Kenya communication authority (2022) established that profitability in Kenya telecommunication industry has been declining whereby voice traffic reduced from 1.8 billion to 1.7 billion in the last quarter last quarter of 2021. The CA Quality of Service Report (QoS, 2023) showed that only Safaricom surpassed the 80% performance threshold. The firm attained 90% of the set Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Airtel and Telkom Kenya attained 79% and 65% respectively hence did not meet the 80% QoS and KPIs threshold.

It is on this basis that the study sought to examine the influence of strategic leadership practices on the organization performance of telecommunication firms in Kenya.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was guided by the following specific objectives; -

i. To examine the influence of rate of human capital development on performance of telecommunication firms in Nairobi City County, Kenya.
ii. To establish the influence of rate of operational efficacy on performance of telecommunication firms in Nairobi City County, Kenya.
iii. To assess the influence of rate of strategic control systems on performance of telecommunication firms in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Human capital development practices once identified and implemented would always produce improved organizational performance. Collins and Clark (2003) noted that human capital development practices shape the skills, attitudes, and behavior of employees to work better for improved performance. Mohammad (2016) supports that there is a substantial relationship between human capital which included learning, knowledge, skills on organizational performance. Abduland and Abdulrahman (2016) further concurs by examining that human capital development is crucial in that it contributes towards achieving a company's mission and vision.

Ojokuku and Sajuyigbe (2015) revealed that human capital development variables significantly affect the SMEs' performance. On the same note, Mwaniki and Gathenya (2015) that recruitment and selection positively affected organizational performance. Banu and Chandran (2019) hold the view that proper recruitment and selection of bank employees and rationalized performance evaluation are able to give maximum benefit to their customer in the form of best service quality and satisfaction. It is revealed that proper recruitment and selection of bank employees and rationalized performance evaluation are able to give maximum benefit to their customer in the form of best service quality and satisfaction. Waseef, Saif and Iqbal (2011) divulged the connection amidst human capital and organizational performance and established that Human Capital Management considerably impacted on performance of organizations.

Improved organizational performance is achieved by enhancing operational efficacy of the organization's operations by continuous, improved processes, decision-making, restructuring and competency developments (Nyangau, 2015). Nzoka (2013) indicated that operational efficacy (OE) initiatives is established to spur the company's performance and profitability, through continuous improvement in making decisions, continuous ventures, profitability, customer service and human capitals competencies. Nyangau (2015) concurs that organizational performance is driven by operational efficacy strategies, employees' development, involvement, investments in information technology to drive innovation and partnerships. OE strategies were found to have a substantial effect on performance of organizations. Operational efficacy (OE) strategies enhanced linkage of staff, procedures, and the firms used technology to exploit resources, business opportunities and performance. On the same breath, operational efficiency is the capability of a business to deliver quality commodities to customers in the most cost-effective manner possible. The operating efficiency of a business in relation to the efficient utilization of the assets is reflected in net profit margin. Although a high return margin reflects better performance, a lower margin does not automatically indicate a lower rate of return on assets turnover. Relatively, more efficient firms tend to maintain more stability levels in terms of output and operating performance compared to their other industry peers Mills & Schumann, (1985) and Rao & Lakew, (2012).

Wang and Lin (2014), indicated that commercial banks need to diversify to increase their market share when dealing with derivatives which are associated with higher risk. Organization's success is reflected in its financial performance aiding in meeting investor commitments and subsist competitive market forces. Consequently, strategic leaders ought to consistently incorporate effective control systems in strategy management to guarantee anticipated outcomes and any inconsistency adjusted Wanjohi, (2018). Gaturu, Waiganjo, Bichang'a and Oigo (2015) maintain the same view that there is a positive link among strategic controls and performance of mission hospitals in Kenya. Hussaini (2018) found out that there is a great correlation between internal control components and bank performance.

Gaturu, Waiganjo, Bichang'a and Oigo (2017) also supports this view by saying that there is a significance relation between strategic control and organizational performance in terms of the frequency at which hospital bed is occupied by different patients in a month. However, the study was limited to mission hospitals, whose objective is to offer health services unlike telecommunication firms whose focus is on providing communication initiatives in the country. Wanjohi (2013) found that strategic control has a positive and significant effect on organizational performance. Also Lubanga (2019) asserts that strategic control positively and significantly predicted company performance. Ondoro (2017) hold the same view where he commented that there is a positive connection among the in-depth of strategic control systems used and financial performance of an organization.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design, whereby information was gathered on a population at a single point in time because a pre-determined set of questions was used to elicit a set of feelings and answers from the respondents based on the objectives of the study, Kapoor and Sandhu, (2010). This type of design has previously been successfully used by Antoni and Portale, (2010) and Chaudhry and Krishnan, (2007). The study was conducted in Nairobi City among telecommunication companies.

The study targeted the Tier 1 Telecommunication Firms in Kenya. Lodge (2016) asserts that the country has three tier 1 registered telecommunication firms; Safaricom PLC, Airtel Kenya Limited and Telkom Kenya Limited. According to the Communications Authority of Kenya (AC, 2023) telecommunication firm's classifications, tier 1 operators are telecommunication firms that own a network, host their own numbers and provide data and voice services. Hence, the unit of analysis was the top and middle level managers. The managers were targeted since they are responsible for formulating strategies and passing them to the departmental supervisors who ensures that the staff implement the firm strategies effectively. This cadre of employees is suitable to give the full and unbiased assessment on the influence of strategic leadership practices being carried out in their respective organizations by their leadership.

The study targeted 650 top and middle level managers of the three named companies. Mugenda and Mugenda (2008) recommended that a representative sample should comprise between 10-30% of the population; they assert that, a good population sample should be at least 10% and not more than 30% of the entire population. Hence a 30% of the total target population was sampled through a stratified sampling whereby three strata was formed based on each firm under the study. From every strata, based on the population size a proportionate sample size was obtained to form a sum total of 195 respondents to be involved in the study. Furthermore, in every strata a simple random sampling was employed to pick into the respondents until the desired number was reached. The sample size for each strata was calculated using the following formula:

$$\frac{c}{u} \times n$$

Where;

c population in the stratum

u total population under study

n sample size

The study collected primary data using questionnaires. They were structured containing closed-ended questionnaires consisting of Likert scale. The questionnaires were designed on a five-point Likert. This study used content validity. The process of validation enabled the researchers to test the suitability of the questions, the adequacy of the instructions provided, the appropriateness of the format and sequence of questions. Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure reliability. The reliability test was conducted to validate the consistency in responses given by respondents. A pilot test was conducted with 10% of the sample size as recommended by Orodho (2014). The pilot was conducted with 20 top and middle level managers in Nakuru County. The aim was to establish if the survey instrument would provide reliable results. According to Chelsea (2015), Cronbach's alpha is determined by correlating the score with the total score for each observation for each scale item and then comparing it to the variance for all individual item scores. He further posits that the resulting reliability of the coefficient ranges from 0 to 1. However, a minimum coefficient of 0.7 to 0.8 (or higher) is suggested and adopted by many researchers, and coefficients 0.5 or less is generally are unacceptable. The data collected was scrutinized, coded, and keyed into SPSS version 29 for analysis. The inferential statistics included correlations and regression. Correlation was used to measure the strength of the relationship between study variables. Regression was on the other hand used to determine how a unit change in the independent variable causes a unit change in the dependent variable. All the tests significance level was at 0.05 significance level. The multivariate linear regression equation was;

$$\mathbf{Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \varepsilon}$$

Whereby;

β_0	Constant coefficients
Y	Firm performance
X_1	Human capital development
X_2	Operation efficacy
X_3	Strategic Control
ε	An error term

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The number of questionnaires presented to the respondents was 195, and 172 respondents successfully completed and returned. This gave the study 88.2% response rate, whereas 23 questionnaires were never returned, which counted for 11. 8%.

Table 1: Regression Model Summary Results

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.820[a]	.792	.752	.56958

Source: Research Data, (2024)

The regression model in table 1 above shows that there is a positive relationship between independent variables (rate of human capacity development, rate of operational efficacy and rate of strategic control) and dependent variable (organization performance of telecommunication firms) as indicated by the R value of 0.820. The results also show a strong correlation between the independent variables and the dependent variable as exhibited the value of R^2 as 0.792, which is the determinant of coefficient or variation. This suggests a very significant strong relationship between strategic leadership practices and organization performance of telecommunication firms in Nairobi City County. The R^2 value can be translated as 79.2%, which indicates how much of the organization performance of the telecommunication firms can be explained by the strategic leadership practices. This implies that the strategic leadership practices studied account for 79.2% and the remaining practices have 20.8%. It is imperative that managers in those firms not to ignore any other emerging strategic leadership that has not been involved in this study such as ICT adoption and innovation.

Table 2: ANOVA Results

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	4.222	5	1.055	2.253	.000[a]
Residual	36.984	167	.324		
Total	41.205	172			

Source: Research Data, (2024)

The ANOVA statistics was used to test the fitness of regression model and the significance F value of 2.253 with P value=0.000 was obtained as displayed in the table 2, which is within the significance level of 0.05. This therefore means that the regression model obtained was fit and can be deemed fit for prediction purposes. Again this connotes that strategic leadership practices under study do affect strongly organization performance of telecommunication firms.

Table 3: Variables Coefficients Results

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.136	.333		6.422	.000
Rate of Human Capacity Development	.143	.092	.171	2.556	.000
Rate of Operational Efficacy	.129	.068	.200	2.910	.000
Rate of Strategic Control	.012	.030	.037	.400	.003

Source: Research Data, (2024)

After the analysis of the strategic leadership practices against organization performance of telecommunication as shown in table 12 above; the findings revealed that rate of human capacity development had a P=.000, which is within the significance level of 0.05. This implies a very strong relationship between rate of human capacity development with the dependent variable. Secondly, the rate of operational efficacy had a P=.000, still connoting a very strong relationship between it and the organization performance of telecommunication firms. Finally, the rate strategic control systems scored a P value=.003, which is also within the significance level of 0.05 connoting a strong relationship with the dependent variable under study.

As per the variable coefficients results generated in table 12 above, the earlier multiple linear regression for the study was; y=f **($ß0+ X_1+X_2+ X_3+\varepsilon$)**

The model, therefore, for the study will now appear as below;

Y=2.136 + 0.143+ 0.129+ 0.012

From the model it can deduced that a unit increase in the rate of human capacity development would increase by a value of 14.3%, whereas the rate of operational efficacy would increase by a value of 12.9%, and rate of strategic control would increase performance of telecommunication in Nairobi City County by a value of 1.2%. This is a clear indication that out of the three strategic leadership practices studied, all of them strongly affect the organization performance of telecommunication firms. Therefore, it is upon the telecommunication firms to ensure that they incorporate these strategic leadership practices in their business strategies so that can assist in the enhancing of their organization performance. Caution is however given to those three said practices not to be used as the only strategic leadership practices; instead firms should be alert to any other emerging strategic practices that has not featured in this study such as ICT adoption, innovation, strategic alliances and collaboration.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The study findings indicate that strategic leadership practices affecting organization performance have significant influence. In as far as the influence of rate of human capacity development on organization performance is concerned, the findings are echoed by Collins and Clark (2003) who note that human capital development practices shape the skills, attitudes, and behavior of employees to work better for improved performance. Mohammad (2016) reveal that there is a substantial relationship between human capital which included learning, knowledge, skills and organizational performance. Abduland and Abdulrahman (2016) indicate that human capital development was crucial in that it contributed towards achieving a company's mission and vision. Ojokuku and Sajuyigbe (2015) also concur that human capital development variables significantly affect the small and medium enterprises' performance. Mwaniki and Gathenya (2015) found out that recruitment and selection positively affect organizational performance. On the same breath, Banu and Chandran (2019) agree that proper recruitment and selection of bank employees and rationalized performance evaluation are able to give maximum benefit to the customer in the form of best service quality and satisfaction. Waseef, Saif and Iqbal (2011) further support the view that human capacity management (HCM) considerably impact on organization performance. On the influence of rate of operational efficacy as on organization performance is concerned, the findings are in agreement with other studies, for example, Nyangau, (2015) who maintained that improved organizational performance is achieved by enhancing operational efficacy of the organization's operations by continuous, improved processes, decision-making, restructuring and competency developments. Nzoka (2013) also indicated that operational efficacy (OE) initiatives was established to spur the company's performance and profitability, through continuous improvement in making decisions, continuous ventures, profitability, customer service and human capitals competencies. Nyangau (2015) further argued that organizational performance is driven by operational efficacy strategies, employees' development, involvement, investments in information technology to drive innovation and partnerships. Therefore, operational strategies were found to have a substantial effect on organization performance and enhanced linkages and collaborations. Finally, in as far as the influence of rate of strategic control systems is concerned; the findings are supported by Wanjohi, (2018) and Gaturu, *et al*, (2015) who argue that strategic leaders ought to consistently incorporate effective control systems in strategy management to guarantee anticipated outcomes and any inconsistency adjusted. They further maintain that there is a positive link among strategic control and performance of organizations. Muraleetharan (2013) and Hussaini (2018) are of the same view that there is connection between control activities and organizational performance. Wanjohi (2013), Ondoro (2017) and Lubanga (2019) also confirm that strategic control has a positive and significant effect on organizational performance. The essence of these findings is that consistent organization performance is an essential aspect of a well to do business. To improve on that performance, it is advisable for telecommunication firms in particular to incorporate and practice these strategic leadership practices and any other emerging strategic practices as a competitive advantage strategy measure.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study was to examine to which extent the rate of human capacity development, rate of operational efficacy and rate of strategic control systems influence organization performance of telecommunication firms in Nairobi City County. It should be noted that out of the three strategic leadership practices studied, all registered a strong relationship against the organization performance of telecommunication firms; these are rate of human capacity development, rate of operational efficacy and rate of strategic control systems, thus none posted a weak relationship with the dependent variable. Therefore, it is upon the telecommunication firms and any other serious ventures to ensure that they incorporate and fully implement these strategic leadership practices in their business strategies in a professional manner so that they can enhance their sales or organization performance. From these findings on the influence of strategic leadership practices on organization performance it can be concluded that rate of human capacity development, rate of operational efficacy and rate of strategic control systems are important strategic leadership practices or factors required for telecommunication firms to organization enhancement and performance. However, caution should be highly exercised not to neglect other strategic practices that have not featured in this study such as ICT adoption, strategic alliances and collaboration, network affiliation, and innovation to mention but a few.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study the researcher recommends the following;

In as far as rate of human capacity development is concerned all parameters tested showed strong relationship to the dependent variable. Therefore, developing of human capacity should be a continuous practice in an organization. This is essential in that it will enable the firm to introduce new products and/or services ahead of their competitors which will earn it a competitive advantage. Further, it will keep the firms on a pro-activeness mode, which is a vital ingredient for any telecommunication firm to practice so as to remain relevant in the business, which involves being aggressive and have unconventional tactics towards rival firms in the same market segment.

Secondly, rate of operational efficacy also showed a very strong reliability to the dependent variable, as all the parameters studied were supportive of the practice. This calls for the management of telecommunication organizations to up held the practice of operation efficacy for impeccable performance in their firms. Failure to embrace it, is an outright acceptance to be positioned by the competitors or being ready to get out of business. It is also important upon the operators to be inculcate that culture in their operations in order to remain competitive in this lucrative industry.

Thirdly, rate of strategic control systems also posted a strong influence in all the areas studied to the dependent variable. Therefore, telecommunication operators are like any other businesses, so they need to be keen on control systems for their businesses to survive. This aspect therefore, is supported by being proactive first, that is, having prior knowledge of what to expect before something surprises you whether in favour of the business or against. The telecommunication operators should also know that having state of the art strategic control systems involves serious investments regardless of their sizes and age of the firm. Similarly, having poor or lack of strategic control systems have dire consequences.

Finally, it is upon the telecommunication firms to ensure that they adopt these three strategic leadership practices so that can assist in the enhancement of their organization performance. However, caution is given to those three said practices that they should not only be used dogmatically as the only strategic leadership practices; instead firms should be alert to any other emerging practices that has not featured in this study such as ICT adoption, strategic alliances and collaboration, network affiliation, and innovation.

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