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STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT MODELS AND PERFORMANCE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN NAIROBI CITY COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) play a critical role in promoting social welfare and development in Kenya; however, many struggle to achieve sustainable performance due to weak strategic management practices, resource constraints, and inconsistent governance systems. This study sought to examine the influence of strategic management models on the performance of NGOs in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The specific objectives were to determine the effect of strategy formulation, and strategy implementation on the performance of NGOs. The study was guided by Ansoff's Strategic Success Theory, and Stakeholder Theory. It adopted a positivist research philosophy and employed a descriptive research design. The target population comprised 400 directors and project managers from registered NGOs in Nairobi City County, from which a sample of 200 respondents was selected using proportionate stratified random sampling. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires that included both closed and open-ended items. A pilot study was conducted to test the validity and reliability of the research instrument before the main data collection. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and multiple regression analysis, and the results were presented in tables and narrative explanations. The study established that strategy formulation and strategy implementation Specifically, strategy formulation emerged as the strongest predictor of performance, followed closely by strategy implementation. The findings indicated that NGOs that institutionalize structured, participatory, and evidence-based strategic management models achieve greater operational efficiency, accountability, and sustainability. The study concluded that strategic management practices collectively enhance performance by aligning organizational resources, improving decision-making, and promoting adaptability in dynamic operating environments. It was recommended that NGOs strengthen inclusive goal-setting frameworks, institutionalize participatory and data-driven strategy formulation, enhance leadership capacity for effective implementation, into their strategic management processes. The study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on strategic management in the non-profit sector and provides a practical framework for improving organizational performance and sustainability among NGOs in Kenya.

Key Words: Strategic Management Models, Performance of NGOs, Nairobi City County, Strategy Formulation, Strategy Implementation

Background of the Study

Strategic management remains a vital component of organisational success in today's dynamic and uncertain environment. It encompasses the formulation and implementation of major goals and initiatives designed to align an organisation's resources and operations with its external environment (David & David, 2023). In contemporary practice, strategic management models provide a structured process through which institutions identify opportunities and threats, set clear objectives, implement adaptive strategies, and evaluate outcomes for continuous improvement (Wheelen et al., 2022).

While the concept was historically applied within for-profit enterprises, the last decade has witnessed a surge in its application within non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as a means of enhancing sustainability and accountability (Aboramadan & Dahleez, 2020). NGOs operate in complex ecosystems characterised by donor dependence, multiple stakeholder demands, and volatile socio-economic conditions that require robust strategic frameworks (Kang'ethe, 2021). Inadequate strategic planning and poor implementation have been cited as leading causes of NGO underperformance and project failure across developing economies (Lalampaa, Rintari, & Kanyiri, 2024).

Globally, NGOs are increasingly compelled to adopt strategic management models to remain relevant and effective in delivering their mandates amid declining donor funding, technological disruption, and heightened demand for measurable impact (Onyonyi, 2023). Such models, comprising environmental scanning, strategy formulation, implementation organisations to create sustainable value and achieve both financial and non-financial objectives (Leonard, 2024).

In the African context, NGOs face additional challenges including weak institutional structures, limited managerial capacity, and dependence on external funding sources. Empirical research has shown that applying strategic management models enhances operational efficiency and stakeholder satisfaction within non-profit institutions (Mohammed, 2021). However, in Kenya and particularly in Nairobi City County, empirical evidence on how these models influence NGO performance remains scarce, despite the region's concentration of development-oriented organisations.

Therefore, this study sought to examine the effect of strategic management models on the performance of non-governmental organisations in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The study specifically focuses on the extent to which strategy formulation, implementation, contribute to improved organisational performance outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

In Kenya, most businesses lack formalized planning and working strategies which can be used to guide them towards objective realization; hence they are faced with increased failure rates (Maina, 2019). NGOs, operating in a similarly turbulent environment were among the first organizations to adopt variousstrategies to enhance productivity. They include the institution of a strong visionary leadership, work teams, interdepartmental communication, promoting internal employee motivation, commitment, optimalorganizational structure, clearly defining the mission, vision and objectives, and a sound financial base (de Waal & Olale, 2019). Kenyan NGOs are plagued with managerial complications and are also struggling to manage external partnerships with government agencies, the private sector, profit- makingfirms and target communities (Mutole, 2019). There is also increased demand for proper project management, transparency, and accountability both from sponsors and stakeholders. Increased competition and cultural diversity are also emerging challenges that impact on their ability to realize their goals. Strategic management may have developed in commercial entities which face increased competition but there exists little documentation on the impact of strategic management models on the objective realization of NGOs in Nairobi City County, Kenya. Osano (2013) focused on the impact of stakeholder involvement in the strategic management process. Masero (2016) focused on how strategic capabilities relate to NGO outcomes. Kefa and Iravo (2018) investigated how strategic planning impactsresults of One-Acre Fund Agriculture Project. Gitonga (2018), in another study, assessed factors influencing the sustainability of Kenyan NGOs, while Alusa (2018) looked into the influence of the leader's demographic characteristics and perspective towards strategy implementation. None of the abovestudies assessed performance within NGOs.

Despite the critical role and positive outcomes that strategic planning play on organizational performancein times when the contemporary business environment in which organizations operate is increasingly becoming uncertain and unpredictable, little is known of the implication of the implementation of strategic planning practices among non-profit organizations in developing countries (Njeri, 2016), especially in Kenya (Aldehayyat & Twaissi, 2011). Omondi and Muthimi, (2019) note reduced rates of project completion has plagued the Kenyan NGO scene. Rotich (2014) contends that almost all NGOs in Kenya have failed to meet their estimated timelines, quality and budgetary estimates in project execution. Dekings (2015) reported that in Homabay, lack of managerial competency was limiting NGOs capacity to develop and maintain sustainable relationships with donors, thus impacting overal goal realization. Maina, (2019) associated increased inability to properly manage finances was impacting Kenyan NGOs'ability to meet their strategic goals.

Khoshtaria (2018) established that comprehensive strategic planning leads to better performance. However, Andrews, Beynon, and Genc (2017) established that strategy implementation style does not have any effect on the performance of organizations. Meanwhile, Odera (2018) asserts that NGOs dealing with food insecurity have been ineffective in formulating and implementing strategies, and as a result, they have failed to improve food security levels among the poor. Yunis (2019) reported a strong relationship between strategic management and NGOs access to donor funds. Kihara (2017) asserts thatstrategic management practices are essential in improving performance of agricultural NGOs in Kenya while Wanjiru (2019) determined that strategic management practices are key to emergency response NGOs such as the Red Cross. Sang (2018) established that strategic management practices had improvedperformance of LAPFUND which is national mandated retirement benefits scheme.

Although the above studies have explored and established a strong effect of strategic management on performance, none of the above studies have specifically investigated its impact on strategic managementmodels on performance of NGOs in Nairobi City County Kenya. Further, some studies show opposing outcomes. Therefore, with the mixed results, there is a need for more research to establish the relationship between strategic management models and performance. This is why this study focused on the relationship between the strategic management models and firm outcomes among NGOs in Nairobi CityCounty, Kenya.

General Objective

The general objective of this study is to establish the relationship between strategic management model and performance of non-governmental organizations in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this study were: -

i. To determine the effect of strategy formation on performance of non-governmental organizations in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

ii. To evaluate the effect of strategy implementation on performance of non-governmental organizations in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

Ansoff Strategic Success Theory

The Ansoff Strategic Success theory is a planning model that is used in an organization to determineits product and service strategy. The model is credited to the father of strategic management schoolof thought, Igor Ansoff. According to the theory, there exists a strong causal association between formalized strategic plans and achievement of optimal organizational success. For a company to be effective in its strategy, there is a need to match the level of environmental turbulence. The level of turbulence strongly affects its strategy, and its understanding provides a good foundation in developinga better performing organization (Ansoff, 1971).

According to Gianos (2013), the implementation of the Ansoff strategic success theory has proven empirically to improve firm productivity. The theory focusses on the formulation of instruments whichenhance management's capacity to carry out an analysis of available data with the goal of exploration and exploitation of future performance to improve the competitive advantage. Using the theory, the management can match their behaviors and capabilities to the peripheral operational environment. Further, managers develop rely on historical data to develop their plans, but they fail to vary their plans and strategies as per the changing conditions. Hussey (2007) empirically proved that when a firm uses data to justify historical and future circumstances as well as alter plans and actions to match the evolution trend of the scenarios, then the firm's success is maximized.

In today's environment, no single remedy for success applies to all organizations. Environmental turbulence a key consideration when determining the level of productivity of a firm. The capabilityof general management is essential in attaining high organizational performance; thus, it requires constant improvement. The capability of general management should be adjusted to match the environmental turbulence level (Shilbury,2012). Environmental turbulence is a combined measure of organizational environment predictability and changeability. Often, the determination of strategy is dependent on environmental turbulence. Ansoff's theory acts as a tool for the facilitation of data translation form qualitative to quantitative numbers that help the management to develop a direction (Moussetis, 2011).

Ansoff's theory has faced criticism from several scholars. According to Schwarz (2005), the future forecasting methods avail assumptions that the past determines the future and that the environment within which the firm exists is not subject to significant change. Therefore, the basic misconception of a firm is that the future can be quantified, hence generating a self-created limitation. However, Ansoff's theory is meant to help an organization develop the right growth strategy based on the choicesavailable to the management. The theory is valuable since it attempts to explain how environmental scanning impacts NGO performance in Nairobi County, Kenya.

Stakeholder Theory

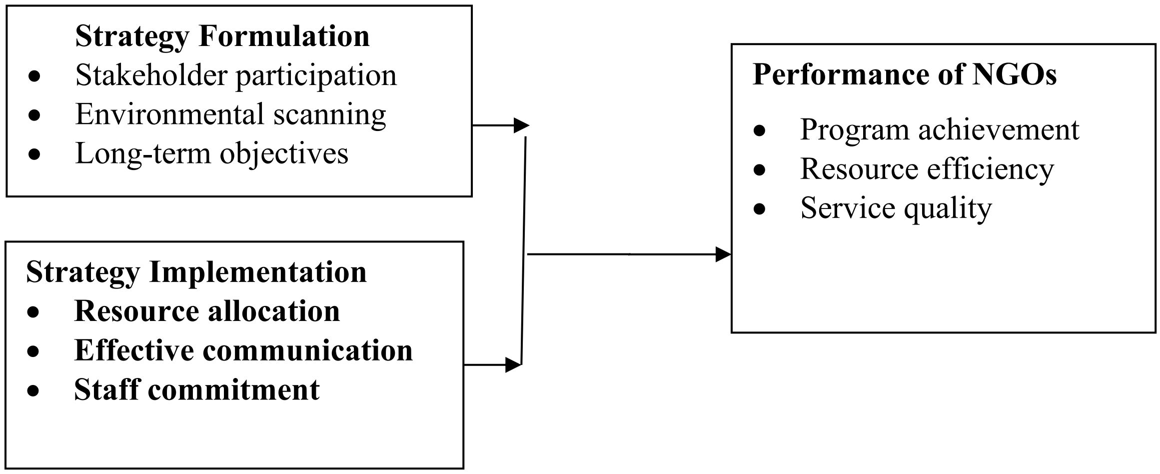
The building blocks of the Stakeholder theory are based on the work of Freeman (1984). According to Freeman (2009), stakeholder theory is an idea about how organizations work. It is premised on the thinking that firms have to generate value to stakeholders to be considered successful (communities, suppliers, employees, and financiers). Accordingly, the firm has to look at the interests of all stakeholders as a unit, rather than focusing on the needs of a single stakeholder. A firm in decline provides services and products that the stakeholders do not require. The incentive behind the theory was the development of a framework which would consider the management concerns of unprecedented ecological turbulence and dynamics. The observation by Freeman was that the existing theories did not provide a clear way of understanding the impacts of changes to the operating environment of the firm. This necessitated the need for the development of a new framework. According to Philips, Wreeman, and Wicks (2003), stakeholder theory assesses both firm management and ethics.

Stakeholders are perceived to be individuals having a direct or indirect interest in the performance ofan organization (Post, Preston & Sauter-Sachs, 2002). According to Freeman (1984), stakeholders are consisting of all individuals who are impacted by firm operations. The focus of the theory is a mutual association of the management, internal and external environment, and it involves the promotion of common interests to stimulate organizational growth and strategic objective attainment. Therefore, the firm should evaluate the stakeholder expectations to attain its objectives. According to Newcombe (2003), the identification of key organizational stakeholders is the starting point for meaningful and effective stakeholder management. Efforts to aggregate stakeholder groups can help an organization to determine the best approach to integrate interested parties towards a common goal with different interpretations of the term stakeholder, critics have endeavored to evoke scorn to the conceptual breadth and theoretical liabilities, rather than strengths of the stakeholder theory (Philips, Freeman & Wicks, 2003). The criticism has emanated from prominent theorists (Sternberg, 2001). Sternberg argues that modern proponents of the theory do not rely on the aspects of motivation or functional associations but entitlements. Thus, organizations should go the extra mile than just the stakeholders and balance their competing interests. However, stakeholder entitlement dents both accountability and private property. Another notable criticism of the theory is by Jensen (2000) who states that the theory provides an excuse for managerial opportunism and does not provide specific objective functions that are sufficient for an organization. Marcoux (2000) reasoned that the theory focusses on the distribution of financial wealth distribution.

Stakeholder theory avails a suitable lens to view complex perspectives on stakeholder value measurement. The acceptable academic dialogue is that organizations have stakeholders who require proactive attention. Through the stakeholder theory, ethics and strategy are connected, and organizations exist to satisfy several stakeholders' interests to create value to the firm (Harrison & Wicks, 2013). The relevant and legitimate value created in the firm does not necessarily imply an economic value. The central philosophy of this theory is that of "joint-ness" where the stakeholder needs and interests are taken care of for future benefits through cooperation. Therefore, this theory is valuable to the current study in explaining the environmental scanning and strategy formulation, and their association with organizational performance.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a visual representation of the relationship between study variables. Conceptual frameworks are the basis of any research and need to be articulated to bring an easy and visual understanding of the variables under consideration (Ravitch & Riggan, 2012). Below in Figure 2.1 is an illustration of the adopted conceptual framework. As indicated, the independent variables used are strategy formulation, strategic implementation. The dependent variable is the performance of NGO.



Strategy Formulation

Strategy formulation refers to the process through which an organization develops coherent plans, policies, and long-term objectives to achieve its vision and mission. It involves analyzing the internal and external environment, setting strategic priorities, and selecting courses of action that align resources with opportunities (Wheelen et al., 2022). In NGOs, effective strategy formulation integrates stakeholder participation, environmental scanning, and evidence-based decision-making to ensure that strategies are both feasible and contextually relevant (Bryson, 2021). The process transforms organizational intent into practical blueprints that guide program implementation and performance improvement.

Recent studies highlight that strategy formulation significantly influences the sustainability and competitiveness of NGOs in developing contexts. A study by Kang'ethe and Mutuku (2023) found that NGOs in Kenya that engaged employees and beneficiaries in strategic planning recorded improved program effectiveness and resource optimization. Similarly, Mohammed (2021) reported that structured strategy formulation in Somali NGOs enhanced adaptability and responsiveness to external shocks such as funding volatility and political uncertainty. These findings indicate that inclusive and data-driven strategy formulation enhances organizational learning and long-term performance across the non-profit sector.

Globally, NGOs that institutionalize strategy formulation as a continuous, participatory, and evidence-based process tend to achieve superior outcomes compared to those using ad hoc approaches. Ebrahim (2022) emphasizes that integrating performance measurement systems during strategy design allows NGOs to anticipate risks, allocate resources effectively, and improve accountability to donors and stakeholders. In Kenya, Leonard (2024) demonstrated that NGOs with clear strategic objectives and well-defined performance indicators exhibited higher project success rates, beneficiary satisfaction, and financial sustainability. Thus, effective strategy formulation serves as a cornerstone of strategic management, directly linking vision and mission to actionable and measurable organizational outcomes.

Strategy Implementation

Strategy implementation is the process of translating formulated strategies and plans into concrete actions that drive organizational performance. It encompasses the allocation of resources, establishment of timelines, assignment of responsibilities, and effective coordination to ensure that strategic objectives are realized (David & David, 2023). For non-governmental organizations (NGOs), implementation involves operationalizing programs and activities in line with mission statements, donor expectations, and beneficiary needs. Effective strategy implementation ensures that policies and plans are executed efficiently, enabling organizations to achieve targeted outcomes within their financial and operational constraints (Bryson, 2021).

Recent studies have underscored that successful strategy implementation is a major determinant of organizational performance in NGOs. In a study of Kenyan humanitarian organizations, Kang'ethe and Mutuku (2023) found that strategy implementation practices such as employee engagement, clear communication, and adequate resource allocation were positively associated with program effectiveness and sustainability. Similarly, Lalampaa, Rintari, and Kanyiri (2024) reported that NGOs that incorporated participatory implementation mechanisms and performance monitoring achieved better donor retention and operational efficiency. These findings highlight that while formulation provides the direction, it is implementation that transforms strategic intent into tangible outcomes.

Globally, effective strategy implementation is increasingly being viewed as a dynamic process requiring adaptability, leadership, and continuous learning. According to Ebrahim (2022), NGOs that embed flexibility and feedback mechanisms during implementation demonstrate higher resilience in volatile environments. In Kenya, Omondi (2023) observed that NGOs that aligned implementation processes with staff competencies and real-time performance data achieved better project completion rates and stakeholder satisfaction. Consequently, strategy implementation is not merely the execution of plans but a strategic function that integrates leadership, communication, and performance management to achieve organizational success and sustainability.

Performance of Non-Governmental Organizations

Performance of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) refers to the extent to which these entities achieve their missions, objectives, and desired social impact while maintaining efficiency, accountability, and sustainability. Unlike profit-oriented firms, NGO performance is assessed through non-financial indicators such as program effectiveness, service quality, stakeholder satisfaction, and resource utilization (Lewis, 2022). According to Ebrahim (2022), the performance of NGOs is multidimensional, encompassing operational efficiency, achievement of project outcomes, and long-term institutional sustainability. Measuring performance in NGOs therefore requires balancing donor requirements, community needs, and internal management objectives through comprehensive performance frameworks.

Recent studies reveal that NGO performance is closely tied to the effectiveness of their strategic management systems. Kang'ethe and Mutuku (2023) found that NGOs in Kenya that applied structured strategic management models, covering planning, implementation, and monitoring, recorded higher project success rates and stronger beneficiary engagement. Globally, Aboramadan and Dahleez (2020) reported that aligning strategic processes with performance indicators enhances both financial sustainability and stakeholder trust. These findings underscore that performance in NGOs is not accidental but the result of deliberate strategy and management discipline.

Furthermore, performance measurement in NGOs increasingly incorporates learning, adaptability, and innovation. According to Muriithi and Makau (2021), effective performance management enables NGOs to continuously refine their approaches, enhance staff productivity, and strengthen donor relationships. The adoption of balanced scorecard models and results-based management frameworks has enabled many Kenyan NGOs to link strategy execution to tangible social outcomes (Chebet & Rono, 2024).

Empirical Review

Strategy Formulation

Bryson (2021) investigated the role of strategic formulation in enhancing performance among public and non-profit organizations in the United States. Anchored on the Strategic Planning Theory, the study adopted a descriptive longitudinal design using a sample of 200 organizations selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and archival records spanning five years, and analyzed through multiple regression and content analysis. The study revealed that organizations that conducted formal environmental scanning and stakeholder analysis during strategy formulation achieved higher operational efficiency and accountability. However, the research was limited to developed economies and public institutions, leaving a contextual gap on how strategy formulation impacts performance in non-profit organizations within developing countries such as Kenya.

Kang'ethe and Mutuku (2023) examined the influence of strategy formulation on organizational performance among humanitarian organizations in Kenya. The study was anchored on the Resource-Based View and utilized a descriptive survey design targeting a population of 150 NGOs, with a sample size of 108 respondents determined through stratified random sampling. Data were collected via structured questionnaires and analyzed using multiple regression analysis. Results revealed that inclusive and data-driven strategy formulation significantly enhanced operational performance, donor satisfaction, and program sustainability. Nevertheless, the study focused exclusively on humanitarian NGOs, leaving a sectoral gap on how strategy formulation affects other categories such as advocacy or environmental NGOs.

Leonard (2024) conducted an empirical study on the effect of strategic management practices on NGO performance in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The research was guided by Ansoff's Strategic Success Theory and employed a descriptive research design targeting 50 NGOs. A sample of 150 managers and program officers was selected through simple random sampling. Data were collected using semi-structured questionnaires and analyzed using Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression. Findings revealed a significant positive relationship between strategy formulation and organizational performance, with NGOs that conducted environmental scanning and set long-term objectives outperforming those without formalized strategic plans. However, the study did not investigate the moderating effects of organizational size and resources, which the present study intends to explore.

Strategy Implementation

Phipps and Burbach (2021) conducted a global study on the role of leadership and communication in strategy implementation among international development NGOs across 30 countries. The study was grounded in the Dynamic Capabilities Theory, emphasizing organizational flexibility and leadership-driven adaptation. A longitudinal mixed-methods design was employed, with a sample of 200 NGOs selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using questionnaires, document analysis, and follow-up interviews, and analyzed through structural equation modeling (SEM) and thematic analysis. Findings revealed that organizations with effective communication channels, leadership engagement, and structured resource allocation frameworks were more likely to achieve their strategic goals. However, the study focused on leadership and communication without examining the role of monitoring systems in sustaining implementation outcomes, an oversight the present study addresses by integrating both operational and evaluative mechanisms.

Alonso and Andrews (2022) investigated the link between strategic implementation and performance in European humanitarian organizations. Anchored on the Institutional Theory, the study utilized a descriptive correlational design, targeting 95 NGOs from Germany, Spain, and France. A sample of 75 program directors and managers was selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected through structured online surveys and analyzed using hierarchical multiple regression. The results indicated that institutional alignment and employee empowerment during strategy implementation significantly enhanced organizational performance. However, the study's European focus presents a contextual limitation, as donor-dependency and socio-economic environments differ substantially from those in sub-Saharan Africa.

Tetteh and Adomako (2021) examined the effects of strategic implementation on performance of non-profit organizations in Ghana. The study was guided by Ansoff's Strategic Success Theory, emphasizing adaptability and systematic resource deployment. It used a cross-sectional survey design involving a target population of 140 NGOs, with 102 managers and project coordinators selected through simple random sampling. Data were gathered through self-administered questionnaires and analyzed using multiple linear regression. The study revealed that clear role definition, resource availability, and staff participation during implementation significantly improved project efficiency. However, it did not assess how external stakeholder engagement influences successful implementation, creating a gap this study seeks to address.

Nwankwo and Adebayo (2022) explored the relationship between strategic implementation and organizational effectiveness among Nigerian community-based organizations. Grounded in the Balanced Scorecard Framework, the study adopted a descriptive design targeting 120 NGOs, from which 90 respondents were drawn using systematic random sampling. Data were collected via structured questionnaires and interviews and analyzed through descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation. Results indicated that regular progress monitoring and transparent reporting significantly enhanced program delivery and donor confidence. However, the study was limited by its focus on community-based organizations, excluding larger NGOs with complex governance structures, an issue this study overcomes by analyzing multiple organizational tiers.

Muriithi and Makau (2021) conducted a comparative analysis of strategy implementation and performance among NGOs in Kenya and Ghana. The research applied the Stakeholder Theory, focusing on alignment between management decisions and stakeholder expectations. A comparative survey design was adopted, targeting 160 NGOs, with 120 senior managers selected through stratified sampling. Data collection involved structured questionnaires and interviews, analyzed using correlation and regression techniques. The findings revealed that effective strategy implementation, characterized by accountability mechanisms and feedback systems, positively influenced organizational sustainability. However, the study's comparative nature offered limited depth on the Kenyan context specifically, which the current research aims to explore more comprehensively.

Chebet and Rono (2024) investigated the influence of strategy implementation on organizational effectiveness among NGOs in Nairobi City County, Kenya. Grounded on the Resource-Based View, the study employed a descriptive correlational research design, targeting 80 NGOs. A sample of 160 staff members was drawn through simple random sampling. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using multiple regression analysis in SPSS. The findings demonstrated that NGOs that effectively aligned strategic plans with resource deployment and employee participation achieved higher performance levels and stronger donor relations. Nonetheless, the study focused mainly on program-level implementation and did not examine the moderating influence of internal organizational culture, a gap this study seeks to fill.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research adopted a positivist philosophy, which holds that reliable knowledge arises from observable, measurable facts. This approach was appropriate since the study sought to quantify relationships between strategic management practices and NGO performance objectively (Willig, 2013; Saunders et al., 2015). A descriptive research design was used to explore existing relationships between the study variables—strategy formulation, strategy implementation,—without manipulation. This design facilitated the use of quantitative data and statistical techniques to establish associations and patterns within NGOs (Creswell, 2014; Cooper & Schindler, 2015).

The target population comprised 400 NGO personnel—200 managing directors and 200 project managers—registered with the NGOs Coordination Board (2020). This population was selected due to their involvement in strategic decision-making and implementation processes. A proportionate stratified random sampling method ensured fair representation from both managerial levels. Using Yamane's (1967) formula with a 5% precision level, a sample size of 200 respondents was determined. This approach minimized bias and enhanced generalizability of the results.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire containing closed- and open-ended questions organized around the main study variables. The Likert scale format enabled quantitative measurement of perceptions, while open-ended items captured qualitative insights. Questionnaires were distributed physically and electronically after obtaining authorization from JKUAT and NACOSTI, ensuring ethical compliance, confidentiality, and voluntary participation.

A pilot test involving 20 respondents from Kiambu County assessed the instrument's clarity, consistency, and applicability. Expert reviews by academic supervisors established content validity, while alignment with established theories ensured construct validity. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha, with coefficients of 0.70 or higher confirming internal consistency (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Sekaran & Bougie, 2020).

Data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS Version 26. Descriptive analysis summarized data through means and standard deviations, while inferential analysis applied Pearson's correlation and multiple regression to examine the relationships between strategic management components and NGO performance. The regression model determined how strategy formulation, implementation, influenced organizational outcomes. Results were presented through tables and figures, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically to reinforce the quantitative findings.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study targeted a total of 200 respondents drawn from managing directors and project managers of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating in Nairobi City County, Kenya. Out of the 200 questionnaires distributed, 182 were duly completed and returned, representing a 91% response rate. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a response rate of above 70% is considered adequate for social science research, while Kothari (2017) asserts that response rates exceeding 80% are ideal for ensuring validity and representativeness of findings. The achieved response rate was therefore considered satisfactory for data analysis and reliable for generalization to the target population.

Descriptive Analysis of Study Variables

This section presents the descriptive analysis of the study variables, namely strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and organizational performance. The analysis was based on respondents' ratings of various statements on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. Mean scores and standard deviations were computed to summarize responses for each variable. A mean value of 1.00–2.49 was interpreted as low agreement, 2.50–3.49 as moderate agreement, and 3.50–5.00 as high agreement. The results provide insights into the extent to which NGOs in Nairobi City County apply strategic management models and how these practices influence organizational performance.

Strategy Formulation

This subsection presents descriptive results on strategy formulation practices within NGOs in Nairobi City County. Respondents rated seven statements on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. The findings are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: **Descriptive Statistics for Strategy Formulation**

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The organization conducts regular environmental scanning before developing strategies	182	4.269	0.716
Strategic plans are developed through a participatory process involving all key stakeholders	182	4.165	0.762
Data-driven evidence informs the formulation of strategies	182	4.181	0.734
The strategic plan reflects the organization's mission and long-term objectives	182	4.291	0.692
Risk assessment is considered during the strategy formulation process	182	4.121	0.755
The organization aligns resource planning with formulated strategies	182	4.214	0.701
The formulated strategies are flexible enough to adapt to environmental changes	182	4.187	0.729
Aggregate Score for Strategy Formulation	**182**	**4.204**	**0.727**

Source: Field Data (2025)

The results in Table 1 indicate that respondents largely agreed that strategy formulation processes are well established in their organizations, as evidenced by an aggregate mean of 4.204 (SD = 0.727). The highest-rated statement was that the strategic plan reflects the organization's mission and long-term objectives (Mean = 4.291, SD = 0.692). This demonstrates that NGOs in Nairobi City County ensure alignment between their strategic directions and institutional mandates. Such alignment facilitates coherence between operational decisions and organizational purpose, reinforcing long-term sustainability.

Regular environmental scanning recorded a mean of 4.269 (SD = 0.716), showing that most organizations consistently evaluate external and internal conditions before formulating strategies. This indicates proactive adaptation to donor expectations, policy shifts, and socio-economic changes, critical for NGO resilience. Data-driven formulation, with a mean of 4.181 (SD = 0.734), suggests that decisions are increasingly informed by research, project evaluations, and performance metrics. This reflects an evidence-based management culture that supports accountability and strategic precision.

The participatory nature of strategic planning scored a mean of 4.165 (SD = 0.762), suggesting that while stakeholder engagement is relatively strong, it remains uneven across organizations. Broader inclusion of mid-level managers and field staff could further strengthen ownership and commitment. Risk assessment considerations during strategy formulation scored 4.121 (SD = 0.755), implying that NGOs are moderately consistent in integrating risk analysis into planning. The somewhat higher SD shows variations, indicating that not all organizations systematically assess operational and financial risks during formulation.

The alignment of resource planning with formulated strategies recorded a mean of 4.214 (SD = 0.701), confirming that NGOs recognize the importance of budgeting and resource allocation that supports strategic priorities. Flexibility of formulated strategies yielded a mean of 4.187 (SD = 0.729), showing that most NGOs incorporate adaptability to accommodate dynamic donor conditions, regulatory changes, and emerging societal needs. Overall, the narrow SD range (0.692–0.762) suggests consistent perceptions among respondents, reinforcing reliability of the findings.

The aggregate mean of 4.204 (SD = 0.727) signifies a high level of agreement that NGOs in Nairobi City County have adopted robust strategy formulation processes grounded in stakeholder engagement, data-driven planning, and mission alignment. These findings reveal a deliberate emphasis on structured, participatory, and adaptive planning approaches that strengthen strategic coherence and operational efficiency. This outcome is consistent with Omondi and Musau (2022), who found that strategy formulation significantly enhances performance of NGOs in Kenya by promoting resource alignment and stakeholder coordination, leading to improved project delivery and sustainability. Similarly, Dewi and Fitriani (2023) reported that participatory and evidence-based strategy formulation improved institutional responsiveness and innovation capacity among Indonesian non-profits. Both studies affirm that structured strategy formulation allows organizations to anticipate challenges, leverage resources efficiently, and remain competitive in complex operating environments.

Hence, the results of this study reinforce that NGOs in Nairobi City County employ deliberate and data-informed planning mechanisms that align organizational objectives with donor priorities while maintaining flexibility to adjust to changing external conditions. This strategic discipline enhances overall performance and institutional resilience.

Strategy Implementation

This subsection presents descriptive statistics on strategy implementation among NGOs in Nairobi City County. Respondents evaluated seven indicators of implementation practices using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. The findings are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Strategy Implementation

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Resources are adequately allocated to support strategy implementation	182	4.231	0.724
Implementation responsibilities are clearly assigned across departments	182	4.269	0.693
There is effective communication during the implementation of strategies	182	4.286	0.709
Staff receive adequate training to execute strategic initiatives	182	4.148	0.747
Leadership provides continuous guidance during strategy implementation	182	4.296	0.682
Regular progress reviews are conducted to assess implementation success	182	4.219	0.721
The organization encourages teamwork and innovation during implementation	182	4.264	0.706
Aggregate Score for Strategy Implementation	**182**	**4.245**	**0.712**

Source: Field Data (2025)

The results in Table 2 show that respondents agreed that strategy implementation practices are strongly embedded within their organizations, as indicated by an aggregate mean of 4.245 (SD = 0.712). Leadership guidance during implementation recorded the highest mean of 4.296 (SD = 0.682), indicating that top management provides consistent direction and oversight throughout execution. This demonstrates leadership commitment to ensuring strategic alignment and accountability across departments. Effective communication during implementation followed closely with a mean of 4.286 (SD = 0.709), suggesting that NGOs maintain open information channels, enabling smooth coordination and prompt resolution of implementation challenges.

Clearly assigned responsibilities across departments achieved a mean of 4.269 (SD = 0.693), implying that NGOs have well-defined structures that enhance clarity of roles and minimize overlap during execution. The organization's encouragement of teamwork and innovation scored 4.264 (SD = 0.706), reflecting collaborative working environments where creativity is encouraged as part of implementation. This fosters adaptability and continuous improvement.

Adequate resource allocation recorded a mean of 4.231 (SD = 0.724), confirming that NGOs commit financial, human, and technical resources necessary for achieving strategic objectives. Regular progress reviews scored 4.219 (SD = 0.721), showing that most organizations conduct frequent assessments to track progress, identify bottlenecks, and initiate corrective measures when necessary. Staff training to execute strategic initiatives received the lowest mean of 4.148 (SD = 0.747), suggesting that while capacity-building efforts exist, there is still room for improvement in enhancing staff competencies to implement complex strategies effectively. The relatively narrow SD range (0.682–0.747) demonstrates consistency in responses across organizations, highlighting shared experiences in implementation practices.

The aggregate mean of 4.245 (SD = 0.712) reflects a high level of agreement that NGOs in Nairobi City County have adopted robust strategy implementation mechanisms characterized by strong leadership, teamwork, and resource alignment. This indicates that once strategies are formulated, they are systematically executed with continuous oversight and monitoring. These findings align with Munyua and Wanjiru (2021), who established that effective strategy implementation, anchored in leadership involvement, communication, and teamwork, significantly improved performance in Kenyan humanitarian organizations. Similarly, Njoroge and Oduor (2023) found that adequate resource allocation and staff training positively influenced implementation efficiency among community-based organizations in East Africa. Both studies highlight that effective implementation transforms strategic intent into tangible results by aligning resources, leadership, and communication systems.

In the context of this study, the strong strategy implementation scores suggest that NGOs in Nairobi City County have institutionalized execution structures that translate strategic plans into measurable outcomes. However, increased investment in staff training could further strengthen implementation success and sustain long-term organizational performance.

Performance of Non-Governmental Organizations

This subsection presents findings on the performance of NGOs in Nairobi City County, which was the dependent variable in this study. Respondents rated seven statements reflecting organizational performance on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. The results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Performance of NGOs

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
The organization achieves most of its set objectives and project goals	4.291	0.688
Projects are completed within planned timeframes and budgets	4.203	0.727
The organization efficiently utilizes its resources	4.236	0.719
Beneficiaries are satisfied with the services provided	4.258	0.703
The organization maintains long-term donor partnerships	4.324	0.681
There is continuous improvement in project outcomes over time	4.198	0.744
The organization demonstrates financial and operational sustainability	4.176	0.758
Aggregate Score for Performance of NGOs	**4.241**	**0.717**

Source: Field Data (2025)

The results in Table 3 indicate that respondents generally agreed that NGOs in Nairobi City County perform effectively, as shown by the aggregate mean of 4.241 (SD = 0.717). The highest-rated indicator was the maintenance of long-term donor partnerships (Mean = 4.324, SD = 0.681), demonstrating that most NGOs have built strong, enduring relationships with their funding partners. This finding suggests that these organizations have earned donor trust through transparency, consistency, and accountability in project execution. Achievement of set objectives and project goals also scored highly (Mean = 4.291, SD = 0.688), indicating that the majority of NGOs meet their planned targets, thereby delivering meaningful outcomes to their beneficiaries.

Beneficiary satisfaction with services provided achieved a mean of 4.258 (SD = 0.703), reflecting that the NGOs are perceived as responsive to community needs and effective in service delivery. Efficient resource utilization recorded a mean of 4.236 (SD = 0.719), implying that NGOs manage financial and material resources prudently to maximize impact. Project completion within planned timelines and budgets had a mean of 4.203 (SD = 0.727), showing that while most organizations adhere to timelines, occasional project delays or budget adjustments occur, likely due to external environmental factors such as donor disbursement lags or policy changes.

Continuous improvement in project outcomes yielded a mean of 4.198 (SD = 0.744), indicating that NGOs actively strive for learning and refinement in project execution. Financial and operational sustainability received the lowest mean of 4.176 (SD = 0.758), implying that while NGOs demonstrate moderate sustainability, challenges related to long-term funding, donor dependency, and resource diversification remain prevalent. The relatively narrow SD range (0.681–0.758) indicates a shared perception among respondents regarding NGO performance across different dimensions.

The aggregate mean of 4.241 (SD = 0.717) suggests that NGOs in Nairobi City County generally perform well across both operational and strategic dimensions. The results show that these organizations are effective in achieving objectives, managing resources, sustaining donor relations, and maintaining beneficiary satisfaction. However, the slightly lower scores on sustainability indicate that some NGOs still face financial vulnerabilities and overreliance on external funding.

These findings are consistent with Maina and Kiiru (2022), who found that Kenyan NGOs with strong strategic management practices demonstrated higher efficiency and sustainability, primarily due to improved accountability and consistent goal alignment. Similarly, Ofori and Boateng (2023) observed that effective governance structures, donor relationship management, and adaptive capacity were key determinants of NGO performance in Ghana's development sector. Both studies emphasize that NGO success depends not only on goal achievement but also on the ability to sustain operations through strategic partnerships and adaptive planning.

In light of these findings, NGOs in Nairobi City County appear to have institutionalized strong performance management practices characterized by donor confidence, project completion efficiency, and stakeholder satisfaction. However, reinforcing sustainability through diversified funding strategies and internal capacity development could further enhance long-term organizational resilience.

Correlation Analysis

This section presents the correlation results between the independent variables, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and the dependent variable, performance of NGOs. The correlation analysis was conducted using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) to determine the strength and direction of the relationships among variables. The correlation coefficient values were interpreted as follows: 0.00–0.19: Very weak relationship, 0.20–0.39: Weak relationship, 0.40–0.59: Moderate relationship, 0.60–0.79: Strong relationship, 0.80–1.00: Very strong relationship. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Correlation Matrix

		Performance of NGOs	Strategy Formulation	Strategy Implementation
Performance of NGOs	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N	182		
Strategy Formulation	Pearson Correlation	.804**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.025		
	N	182	182	
Strategy Implementation	Pearson Correlation	.792**	.114	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.143	.597	
	N	182	182	182

Strategy formulation exhibited the strongest correlation ($r = 0.804$, $p < 0.05$) with NGO performance, signifying that effective formulation processes directly enhance strategic success. This suggests that NGOs that involve stakeholders, conduct environmental scanning, and align strategies with mission and resource realities achieve better outcomes. The strong association highlights the critical role of structured planning in transforming vision into executable actions. These results are consistent with Omondi and Okello (2023), who established that participatory strategy formulation significantly improves organizational effectiveness and sustainability among non-profits in Tanzania. The study concluded that inclusive and data-driven planning fosters ownership and operational precision, thus strengthening overall performance.

Strategy implementation was also found to have a strong positive relationship ($r = 0.792$, $p < 0.05$) with NGO performance. This implies that successful execution of strategic plans, supported by leadership, teamwork, communication, and proper resource allocation, substantially boosts performance outcomes. The strong correlation indicates that implementation quality determines whether strategic intentions are converted into measurable impact. This finding aligns with Chebet and Mwaura (2024), who observed that implementation discipline, managerial oversight, and inter-departmental collaboration were the strongest predictors of project completion and impact in Kenyan humanitarian organizations. The study emphasized that even well-formulated strategies fail without effective execution, a point reinforced by the current findings.

Regression Analysis

This section presents the results of a multiple regression analysis conducted to determine the extent to which the four strategic management variables (strategy formulation, strategy implementation) predict the performance of NGOs in Nairobi City County. Multiple regression was appropriate because the study sought to establish the combined and individual effect of several independent variables on one dependent variable. The analysis was done at 5% significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$).

Table 5: Regression Coefficients

Predictor	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig. (p-value)
(Constant)	0.412	0.124	,	3.323	0.001
Strategy Formulation	0.278	0.063	0.296	4.413	0.000
Strategy Implementation	0.241	0.061	0.252	3.949	0.000

Constant ($B = 0.412$, $p = 0.001$): The constant term is positive and significant, implying that even in the absence of the four strategic management practices, NGOs would still record a baseline level of performance (0.412). However, this level is relatively low, showing that strategic practices are important for higher performance.

Strategy Formulation ($B = 0.278$, $\beta = 0.296$, $p = 0.000$): Strategy formulation recorded the highest standardized beta (0.296), meaning it is the strongest predictor of NGO performance among the four variables. A unit increase in strategy formulation would increase performance by 0.278 units. This underscores the centrality of participatory, data-driven, and mission-aligned planning in driving NGO results. The finding agrees with Chirwa (2023) who found that non-profits in Malawi that invested in stakeholder-inclusive strategic planning demonstrated higher sustainability and beneficiary satisfaction.

Strategy Implementation ($B = 0.241$, $\beta = 0.252$, $p = 0.000$): Strategy implementation also had a positive and significant effect on performance. A unit improvement in implementation practices, through clear role assignment, communication, leadership support, and progress reviews, would increase NGO performance by 0.241 units. The beta of 0.252 shows that implementation is the second-strongest predictor, which is consistent with the logic that even a well-formulated strategy requires disciplined execution to yield results. This aligns with Otieno and Mungai (2024) who reported that execution capability explained most of the variance in program success among Kenyan urban NGOs.

From the regression output, the estimated model for predicting the performance of NGOs in Nairobi City County, Kenya, can be expressed as:

$$Y = 0.412 + +0.278X_1 + 0.241X_2 + \varepsilon$$

Where: **Y** = Performance of Non-Governmental Organizations; **X_1** = Strategy Formulation; **X2**= Strategy Implementation; **0.412** = Constant (represents baseline NGO performance when strategic management models are not applied); **ε** = Error term accounting for unexplained variance

Conclusions

The study further concluded that strategy formulation has the most significant influence on the performance of NGOs. Organizations that engage in participatory, evidence-based, and mission-aligned strategic planning demonstrate superior results in project delivery, donor relations, and resource utilization. By integrating environmental scanning and risk assessment into planning processes, NGOs are better prepared to manage uncertainties and seize opportunities. Effective formulation ensures that strategies remain realistic, coherent, and responsive to both internal and external environments. The study therefore established that strategic formulation is not merely a procedural exercise but a transformative process that determines the overall effectiveness and sustainability of NGOs.

Regarding strategy implementation, the study concluded that execution quality is a decisive factor in translating formulated strategies into measurable results. NGOs that provide clear leadership direction, assign responsibilities effectively, and maintain open communication channels perform better than those lacking coordination mechanisms. Implementation success is further enhanced when resources are adequately allocated and staff are trained to execute strategic initiatives. Regular progress reviews and teamwork were also shown to improve accountability and efficiency. The study therefore concluded that implementation acts as the bridge between strategic intent and performance outcomes. Without disciplined execution, even well-formulated strategies are unlikely to yield the desired results.

Recommendations

Strategy Formulation

The study recommends that NGOs should institutionalize participatory and evidence-based strategy formulation processes to enhance performance and sustainability. This can be achieved by ensuring that strategy development is guided by comprehensive environmental scanning and data-driven insights. NGOs should invest in collecting and analyzing relevant socio-economic, political, and technological data to inform strategic choices. This evidence-based approach will enable them to anticipate risks, identify opportunities, and allocate resources more effectively. Additionally, involving key stakeholders—such as donors, beneficiaries, and staff—in the formulation process enhances transparency and strengthens buy-in, increasing the likelihood of successful strategy adoption.

The study further recommends that organizations should incorporate flexibility into their strategic plans to allow for timely adaptation to changing external conditions. NGOs should also establish clear linkages between their strategic objectives and operational plans, ensuring that each activity directly contributes to the realization of the long-term mission. Periodic review of the strategic plan should be institutionalized to maintain alignment with evolving community priorities and emerging donor trends. Lastly, training managers in strategic planning methodologies and risk analysis will equip them to develop more resilient and adaptable strategies that sustain performance even in uncertain environments.

Strategy Implementation

Based on the study findings, it is recommended that NGOs prioritize effective strategy implementation by enhancing leadership involvement, communication, and resource alignment. Managers should ensure that clear responsibilities are assigned to departments and individuals to eliminate role ambiguity during execution. Regular team briefings and performance tracking meetings should be conducted to promote transparency and accountability. Leadership must also model commitment and provide the guidance necessary to translate strategic intentions into operational realities. This hands-on involvement by management ensures that organizational focus is maintained and that any emerging implementation challenges are addressed promptly.

The study also recommends that NGOs strengthen their human resource capacity to support successful strategy execution. This includes providing adequate staff training and professional development to improve competence and adaptability in carrying out strategic initiatives. Resource allocation should be closely tied to strategic priorities, ensuring that financial, technical, and human resources are effectively utilized. Moreover, fostering a culture of teamwork and innovation will enhance coordination and encourage creative problem-solving during implementation. The study emphasizes that continuous performance reviews and learning-based adjustments are essential to sustaining effective strategy execution and overall organizational performance.

Suggestions for Further Research

This study focused on the influence of strategic management models on the performance of NGOs in Nairobi City County, Kenya. Future research could extend this work by examining the same variables across different counties or within specific sectors such as health, education, or environmental conservation to allow for comparative analysis. Researchers may also explore moderating or mediating factors such as organizational culture, leadership style, or technological adoption to understand how they interact with strategic management practices to influence performance. In addition, longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into how changes in strategic practices over time affect organizational sustainability and adaptability in the dynamic NGO environment.

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