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RESEARCH ARTICLE

INFLUENCE OF STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION ON PERFORMANCE OF CATHOLIC PARISHES IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Measuring organizational performance has become a major preoccupation of many organizations in the modern times. Traditional indicators of performance largely focus on profitability and return on investment. However, with the help of Balanced Scorecard model, organizations both profit and not-for-profit, are adopting performance measurement techniques that go beyond financial performance to cover non-financial indicators of performance. The objective of this study was to establish the influence of strategy implementation on the performance of Catholic parishes in Kenya. This study was anchored on Resource Based View theory and the Balanced Scorecard model. The research employed descriptive survey design. Target population was 90 members of parish pastoral councils of 9 parishes found to be applying strategic management practices at the time of this study. In analyzing and interpreting the quantitative data, descriptive and inferential statistics techniques were employed. Study findings revealed a positive correlation between strategy implementation and performance of parishes. The study recommends strengthening of parish organizational structure to enhance effective execution of parish strategy.

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INTRODUCTION

Strategy implementation is the process of executing the already set out plans in an organization and it involves actualizing the vision of organization as per the strategy formulation. According to Mintzberg (2013), a successful strategy implementation requires an organization to have an enabling structure that makes it capable of executing the formulated strategies. According to Njeru (2015), the concept of organizational performance is not new in the literature yet it is very complex to define. As such, it has different meaning in different contexts and because of this, there is no universal definition of this concept. Ngui (2015) observes that organizational performance is evaluated by its actual output against its projected output. Otieno (2013) defines organizational performance as the achievement of an organization with respect to some set standards like quantified objectives of profitability. To measure organizational performance, both monetary and nonmonetary dimensions of the organization are critical. A combination of both aspects of performance helps the stakeholders to gain insights on testing and comparing their organizational performance, especially the extent of efficient and effective utilization of resources, ability to compete, and readiness to respond to any external pressure

(Ali & Qun, 2019). The degree to which an organization's objectives have been realized is a measure of performance for that organization. Depending on the institution there are several ways of measuring the competitiveness and performance of the organizations. Churches, for example would use increase in membership, retention of old members, and increase in giving of offerings as indicators of growth and performance. The dependent variable of the study which is 'parish performance,' is anchored on Balanced Scorecard model since it focuses on both monetary and non-monetary aspects of measuring performance. BSC model is more applicable in church context since churches are not-for-profit organizations. And hence non-financial measures of performance take centre stage in a parish set up.

Statement of the Problem: Grobler (2008) in his study found out that Church ministers were inadequately prepared in the area of management. Chatira and Mwenje, (2018) in their study concluded that church ministers in Zimbabwe faced management related challenges such as leadership, development, fundraising, time management, and managing church's budget. Soko (2012) found out that church organizations in Kenya are not able to respond to changes since their managers are not skilled in change management

skills. Kung'u (2007) noted that mainstream denominations in Kenya have serious challenges in implementing their strategies.

Otieno (2012), found that most churches in Nairobi have very rudimentary strategies, and while some of these churches have very basic ways of reviewing their strategies, others do not review their strategies at all. Murage, (2018), suggested that Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) head office lack finance and skilled human resource to implement strategic plans. Looking at these studies at a glance, one can tell that churches are yet to embrace management practices in the running of their organizational affairs.

These studies indicate the minimal attention that churches have given to various strategic management practices. The small amount of literature on church and strategic management practices points to an area that is least studied and hence the current study aimed at adding new knowledge in this field. Of the studies reviewed, none focused specifically on the Catholic parishes in Kenya and the study was deemed appropriate to generate a new perspective in the area of church management. The Objective of this study was to examine the influence of strategy implementation on performance of Catholic parishes in Kenya.

Literature Review: This study was anchored on Resource Based View theory and Balanced Scorecard model.

Resource Based View (RBV) Theory: RBV is a technique of identifying and analyzing an organization's strategic uniqueness based on assessment of its distinct collection of skills, assets, intangibles, and capacity. Each firm develops competence from its resources to gain its competitive edge. The concept of competitive advantage is central to the strategic management literature (Barney, 2007). Key contributors in the development of RBV theory include Jay B. Barney, Gary Hamel, George S. Day, and Shelby D. Hunt.

Pearce and Robinson (2008) categorize firm's resources into organizational capabilities, intangible assets, and tangible assets. Tangible assets constitute computers, real estate, raw materials and financial resources. Intangibles include resources like company past record, institutional morale, brand names, Patents, technical knowhow, and cumulative experience within a firm. A firm's capabilities refer to the ability, skills and manner of utilizing assets, personnel, and procedures that an organization applies to convert input to output. Barney (1991) identifies the resources that enable an enterprise to compete favorably as firm's capability, internal procedures, and expertise. In this case therefore, for organizations to favorably engage competitively in the market, they have to embrace unique strategies. According to David (2009), the combination, amount, type, and nature of an organization's internal resources should be given primary consideration while designing strategies that can help an organization achieve a sustainable competitive advantage. To strategically manage an organization, according to RBV, it entails developing and mobilizing an organization's distinct resources and capacities, and sustaining those resources. In order for a company to achieve and sustain competitiveness, it should identify valuable resources bearing three characteristics, that is, they are exceptional, not easy to imitate, and not easy to substitute.

There has been controversy about RBV theory and its application with some scholars holding the view that RBV is conceptualized rather than giving empirical evidence. RBV was deemed relevant for this study since the Catholic Church as an organization has a long history of existence and a unique hierarchical structure of governance. The Catholic Church has established itself as a very influential brand globally, while locally it has permeated practically in all spheres of society with a notable significance in education and health sector.

Balanced Scorecard (BSC) Model: BSC is a performance measurement instrument devised by Robert Kaplan and David Norton in 1992. Its goal is to transform an institution's mission and vision into actions (Vliet, 2014). At the time of its development, there was a strong view that financial based measures of performance were less effective for modern business organizations. Kaplan and Norton embarked on a study to develop new techniques of measuring performance. The starting points of the BSC are grouped into four categories namely; finance, customer, internal business procedures, and innovation and learning (Yahanpath, Pacheco, & Burns, 2017).

Today, BSC has been modified and is being applied by nonprofit and public sectors (Vliet, 2014). According to this theory, there has to be a balance between the short and long term objectives, leading and lagging indicators, financial and non-financial aspects, and external and internal dimensions. It is about harmonious interaction in which an improvement in one perspective must not hinder another perspective. BSC has been employed in many organizations because it emphasizes the need for a balance between both monetary and nonfinancial indicators in a firm's system of managing performance (Kaplan & Norton, 1996). In this case, BSC underscores the necessity of managing and measuring intangible assets to achieve a competitive edge (Kaplan & Norton, 2004). This contribution of BSC makes it more ideal for measuring performance of a religious organization whose main objective is spiritual well being instead of financial performance. Churches as human organizations require a performance measuring system such as BSC to enable them assess their soundness and relevance if they are to wither the complex and competitive atmosphere, even if they are nonprofit organizations with transcendent goals (Yahanpath, Pacheco, & Burns, 2017). In the recent decades, church members are increasingly demanding accountability from church leadership. Even the highly formalized churches like the Catholic Church have not escaped the demand for accountability and transparency as noted by Economist (2014). This theory was chosen as appropriate for the study because it goes beyond financial status as the sole measuring yardstick of organizational performance. Though financial measures are important for the churches, they are not absolute and as such other measures of church performance must be sought. BSC accommodates other performance measurement parameters and hence its importance in this study. Johnson, Scholes and Whittington (2008), observe that the BSC model has gained popularity in organizations because of its expanded scope of performance measurement. Keyt (2001) employed the BSC to a church set-up where he adopted its four performance aspects, namely; internal business, customers, finance, and innovation and learning, and adapted them to four measurement perspectives for churches.

The four perspectives were; membership, ministering, internal ministry processes, and innovation and learning. To Keyt's modified BSC, Yahanpath et al (2017), proposed further modification to the adapted BSC model. He suggested incorporation of financial aspect from Kaplan's and Norton's original BSC. The new model therefore included five perspectives namely; Finance, membership, ministry, internal ministry, and innovation and learning. This study adopted this model as it incorporates the financial perspective thereby making it a more comprehensive measure of performance of parishes. External ministry has to do with evangelism and as such the church is in constant need of new converts in order to flourish. Just as businesses seek to increase their customer numbers, the church must seek to recruit new members. Under internal ministry, the church should meet the needs of its members. Internal ministry activities according to (Keyt,2001), include; preaching, teaching, counseling, children and youth pastoral care, care of the poor in the church among other pastoral care related activities. Internal ministry corresponds to original BSC internal business processes.

Finance perspective in the context of a church organization has no profit component which is a key component in the profit making organizations. Finances in the church mainly come from weekly collections, tithes, and donations. These are used to meet church budgets. Innovation and learning seek to foster the improvement of performance by offering support to the other perspectives (Kaplan&Norton, 1993). Churches ought to constantly adapt to their environment and the emerging needs of their members by embracing new ministerial approaches, forming new leaders and empowering them for the ministry. Thus innovation and learning is meant to help the church recognize and address the ever dynamic needs of their church membership. This model specifically addressed the dependent variable of the study, which is the performance of parishes. By performance in this study refers to the extent that a parish attains its evangelizing mission effectively.

Empirical Review on Strategy Implementation: Muendo (2016) examined the effect of strategy execution on effectiveness of Kenya Bureau of standards in Kenya. The findings revealed that strategy implementation influences the performance of Kenya Bureau of standards. This study restricted itself to a state organization, while the current study focused on parishes which are faith based organizations.

Kariuki (2013) studied the influence of strategy implementation on constituency development fund projects in Kenya. According to the findings, strategy implementation positively influenced the performance of constituency development fund projects. This study looked into the influence of strategy implementation on the effectiveness of constituency development fund projects, while the current research studied the impact of strategy implementation on performance of parishes. Somi (2017) investigated the influence of strategy execution on performance of government entities in Kenya. The findings revealed that strategy implementation had positive influence of on performance of government institutions. While the focus of this study was government entities, the current study concerned itself with faith based organizations. Njagi and Kombo (2014) investigated the influence of strategy execution on commercial banks in Kenya.

The findings revealed a strong relationship between strategy implementation and the banks' performance. The study focused on banking institutions, while this study focused on parishes which are church institutions. Kihara (2016) examined the influence of strategy execution on the productivity of small and medium manufacturing firms in Kenya. The findings indicated a significant positive influence on performance of these firms. This study limited itself to small and medium firms in Kenya, while this current study restricted itself to Catholic parishes.

Obiero and Genga (2018) studied the association of performance and strategy implementation of Kenya revenue authority. The findings revealed a positive association between performance and strategy implementation. The scope of this study was Kenya Revenue Authority, while the scope of the current study was parishes in Kenya. Hantiro and Maina (2020) examined the relationship between strategy implementation and performance of county government of Tana River. Results showed a significant and positive between performance and relationship implementation of Tana River County. This study restricted itself to Tana River County, while the current study restricted itself to parishes in Kenya. Wambani, et al., (2017) analyzed the effect of strategy execution on the productivity of employees in Trans Nzoia County government. Results showed that implementation of strategy improved the performance of employees.

METHODS

The study employed descriptive survey design with the aim of establishing relationship between study variables. The study location was the area covering the 26 Catholic dioceses in Kenya that means all the 47 counties of Kenya. Nine parishes were purposively identified and selected for this study. These parishes were selected since they were the only ones applying strategic management practices to run their operations. The study respondents were ten parish leaders including the parish head catechist and the chairperson of parish pastoral council (PPC). Other officials included parish finance committee chairperson as well as the chairperson parish development committee. Other important respondents were the parish treasurer, Catholic Men Association (CMA) chairman, Catholic Women Association (CWA) chair lady, parish secretary, and the parish vice chair person. These leaders were selected for the study since they are the parish decision makers and therefore they understand better the affairs of the parish. In this study, survey questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data. Some questionnaires were distributed through drop and pick method, while others were sent via email. To analyze quantitative data, the researcher applied descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics enabled the researcher to effectively depict a distribution of measurements using statistics. Relationships and predictions among variables are established using correlation and regression techniques. This study sought to establish the relationships between variables using inferential techniques. Regression relationship showed the degree to which each independent variable influences the dependent variable. Data presentation was done through statistical methods, frequencies and correlation tables. Regressions analysis was used to quantify relationships among variables. Regression model was:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \epsilon$$

Whereas:

Y = the dependent variable (Performance of Parishes)

 β_0 = Denotes a constant factor

 $X_1 =$ Strategy Implementation

 β_1 = Regressions coefficient for independent variable.

 ϵ = Error term factoring other variables that are relevant but not part of the model and which did not form the data set of the study.

RESULTS

The study targeted 90 respondents from the nine parishes selected purposively for this study. Ninety questionnaires were therefore administered and fifty eight duly filled questionnaires were returned and this is given in table 1.

Table 1. Response rate

Response	Total	Percentage
Returned	58	64.44
Unreturned	32	35.56
Total	90	100

Gender of Participants: The researcher was interested in knowing the gender composition church leaders in parishes of a church whose membership is dominated by women yet men dominated key leadership positions. Gender distribution is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Gender of Participants (n=58)

	Frequency	Percent
Male	34	59%
Female	24	41%
Total	58	100.0

Table 2 is tabulated as follows n =58 representing the total number of participants. Male participants were 34 being 59% while the females were 24 with 41%.

Leadership Position of Study Participants: In an attempt to get authentic findings on the influence of strategic management practices on performance of parishes, the researcher opted to focus on key parish leaders. Such leaders participate in the running the affairs of parishes. Ten leaders targeted in the study were; the parish chair person, treasurer, secretary, development and finance committees chair persons, Catholic men and Catholic women associations chair persons, and parish vice chair person and vice secretary.

Descriptive Statistics: Descriptive statistics was done to establish the general view of findings as presented in Table 3.

Inferential Statistics: Inferential statistics were employed to establish the nature and strength of relationship between study variables. They included correlations, ANOVA, and Regression analysis. According to the Table 4, strategic Plan Implementation (SI) has a weak positive correlation with performance of the parish and has a statistical influence on it since r=0.355 and p-value =0.01 which is less than 0.05.

The implication of this relationship is that strategy implementation would improve the performance of parish ministry.

Regression Analysis: Regression analysis was applied to test the influence of predictor variable on the dependent variable. The values of R lie between 0 and 1 and which are used to test the model summary shows coefficient R value of 0.506 indicating a strong and positive relationship between strategy implementation and Performance of parishes. According to this model summary, the value of R Square is 0.256 which means that the proposition of variance in performance of parishes is explained by 25.6% of the independent variable. This means that effective execution of parish strategy by parishes improve performance of parishes by 25.6%. The remaining 74.6% improvement in parish performance is attributable to other factors not captured by this study. The ANOVA Table 6 shows that dependent variable that is; Performance of the Parishes (PP) is statistically influenced by the independent variable which is strategy implementation since the p- value is 0.001 which is below 0.05. The ANOVA also showed that the entire model was significant with the Fratio of 6.181 at p-value = 0.001 which is less below 0.05. These findings indicate that this model can be relied on and that performance of parishes which is the dependent variable of the study in this regression model is not by chance. Coefficients Table 7 indicates that the independent variable has a statistical influence on the dependent variable since the p value is less than 0.05 (0.001). The table also illustrates that the beta coefficients of the resultant model indicates that strategy implementation had a positive influence on performance of parishes with slopes of B2= 0.472 as presented in the simple regression model given:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$$

Y = 1.343 + 0.472SI

SI= Strategy Implementation Y= Performance of Parish Ministry

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study are in agreement with the findings of (Kyalo, 2015) who conducted a study to establish the influence of strategy implementation of KCB group in Kenya. The study revealed that strategy implementation influences performance to a great extent. The study also concurred with the study conducted by (Muendo, 2016) who examined the influence of strategy implementation on performance of Kenya Bureau of standards in Kenya. The findings revealed that strategy implementation influences the performance of Kenya Bureau of standards. The findings of the study also agree with the findings of (Kariuki, 2013) who investigated the influence of strategy implementation on the performance of constituency development fund projects in Kenya. According to the study, strategy implementation has positive influence on the performance of constituency development fund projects. The study also agrees with the findings of (Somi, 2017) who sought to establish the influence of strategy implementation on performance of government owned entities in Kenya. The findings revealed a positive influence of strategy implementation on performance of government entities.

No		5	4	3	2.	1
1	The contents of parish strategic plan have been effectively communicated to the parishioners	1(1.7%)	8(13.8%)	22(37.9%)	19(32.8%)	8(13.8%)
2	The parish has a functioning organizational structure	0	4 (6.9%)	5(8.6%)	17(29.3%)	20(34.5%)
3	The role of every parishioner in the strategy implementation is very clear.	1(1.7%)	10(17.2%)	25(43.1%)	15(25.9%)	7(12.1%)
4	The parish has a clear staff policy.	4(6.9%)	4(6.9%)	21(36.2%)	17(29.3%)	12(20.7%)
5	The parish makes good use of professionals in the parish community in the execution of strategic plan.	1(1.7%)	10(17.2%)	14(24.1%)	16(27.6%)	17(29.3%)
6	The parish development committee oversees the implementation of parish projects.	2(3.4%)	4(6.9%)	11(19%)	25(43.1%)	16(27.6%)
7	The parish finance committee is effective in its role of mobilizing funds.	3(5.2%)	3(5.2%)	14(24.1%)	28(48.2%)	10(17.2%)
8	Catechists in consultation with the parish priests coordinate the parish pastoral activities.	5(8.6%)	1(1.7%)	4(6.9%)	17(29.3%)	31(53.4%)
9	The parish pastoral council receives progress reports from other parish committees regularly.	3(5.9%)	5(8.6%)	24(41.4%)	16(27.6%)	10(17.2%)
10	The parish priest directs the strategy implementation process at all stages.	2(3.4%)	2(3.4%)	8(13.8%)	21(36.2%)	25(43.1%)

Table 4. Correlations matrix

		PP
SI	Pearson Correlation	.283*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.031
	N	58

^{*.} Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 5. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
	.506 ^a	.256	.214	.674

a. Predictor: (Constant), Strategy Implementation

Table 6. ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8.427	3	2.809	6.181	.001 ^b
	Residual	24.542	54	.454		
	Total	32.969	57			

a. Dependent Variable: Parish Performance

b. Predictor: (Constant), Strategy Implementation

Model			ndardized icients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		В	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.343	.396		3.387	.00)1
SI	.472	.138	.500	3.416	.001	

a. Dependent Variable: Parish Performance

The study also agreed with the findings made by (Njagi & Kombo, 2014) who investigated the influence of strategy implementation on the performance of commercial banks in Kenya. Results revealed a strong relationship between strategy implementation and organizational performance. The study is also in agreement with the findings of (Kihara, 2016) who studied the influence of strategy implementation on the performance of manufacturing small and medium firms in Kenya. The results indicated a positive and significant influence on performance of manufacturing firms.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Effective execution of parish strategy was found to be a major contributor of improvement of parish performance.

The parish leadership should therefore ensure there are sufficient resources to actualize the parish strategy. Parish organization structure should also be enhanced to facilitate execution of the strategy. Evaluation of implementation process should be a continuous process so as to detect any deviation in order to make the necessary corrections.

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^{**.} Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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