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**INFLUENCE OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP ON EFFECTIVE
STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION AMONG SAVINGS AND
CREDIT CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES IN KENYA**

Strategy

INFLUENCE OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP ON EFFECTIVE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION AMONG SAVINGS AND CREDIT CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES IN KENYA

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of strategic leadership on effective strategy implementation among SACCOs in Kenya.

Methodology: The study used survey research applying both quantitative and qualitative research methodology. The target population was all the 176 deposit taking SACCOs in Kenya. The study used simple random sampling to select respondents and a sample size of 192 respondents obtained. Questionnaires were used to collect data. Descriptive analysis, Content analysis, analysis of variance (ANOVA), Pearson correlation, multicollinearity tests and multiple regressions were used in analyzing the data.

Results: Strategic leadership had a positive and significant influence with effective strategy implementation;

Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy: Many people believe that formulating an innovative and unique strategy is critical and by itself sufficient to lead an organization to success in today's business world. In an era of technological explosion, progress rigor, and knowledge, centric work cultures, strategic initiatives alone can catapult a firm to market leadership.

Keywords: *Strategic leadership, strategy, strategy implementation*

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The environment that business operates is dynamic that calls upon development of strategic document that affords them to get a good fit. This calls upon proper planning on strategy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. Strategy implementation can be defined as the aggregate of all activities and choices which has been embraced worldwide for execution of a strategic plan across various sectors of diverse economies of the world (Wheelen & Hunger, 2010, Awino & Kithinji, 2012). Organizations employ objectives, strategies, and policies with the development programs, budgets, and procedures. It is noted that, top management commitment and clear strategic fit is required to ensure success strategy implementation (Henry, 2011). The modern Today, organizations both small and big, public and private have purposed to implement organization strategies to up scale organization performance (Thompson & Strickland, 2007).

It is evident that well formulated strategies in management process may set stage for strategy implementation. However, management must afford effective leadership for strategy implementation to be successful. The ability of managers to communicate firm goals clearly and guide the firm to focus their attention on achieving such goals is crucial to success. In Kenya, strategic leadership has attracted the attention of various people and organizations allowing them to reconsider organization plans to enable them to effectively implement organization strategies. The leadership ability is equally important in public, private, and not for profit sectors (Henry, 2011).

The strategic leader allows employees to contribute, solve challenges using new ideas and innovations, learn from experience, and accumulate invisible assets in form of organization capability. The manager must acquaint himself or herself on industry trends by both making strategy clear and by utilizing the process of strategy formulation and strategy implementation to mobilize the organization (Carnall, 2003).

The drive towards flatter and more flexible, empowered, independent and responsive organizations in the current changing global situation necessitates the establishment of an

integrated set of leadership roles. Leadership determines excellent corporate performance. Leadership success in the implementation of strategy is manifested in conducive organization climate (Mosia & Veldsman, 2004). The ability to graft a clear cut strategic vision represent valuable intangible asset which is key to strategy implementation (Mapetere, Mavhiki, Nyamwanza, Sikomwe, & Mhonde, 2012).

Organization that desire to compete effectively must implement strategy effectively. One greatest disappointing outcomes of a strategy process is the failure of strategy implementation. The cause of these disappointing outcomes normally is not that the strategy was poorly formulated or missed an important theme, but rather that the implementation process in itself failed. The winners on the field of business will be the organizations, which not only have a good, solid strategy, organizational capability but more importantly, implement strategies well (Njagi & Kombo, 2014)

Several savings and credit groups or credit unions have been operating in many countries for several years. Microfinance can be observed to have existed since the beginning of 20th century whereas Muhammad Yunus, a Nobel Laureate is credited with laying the foundation of the modern Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs) which led to the establishment of Grameen Bank in 1976 in Bangladesh. This foundation, other than addressing the United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goal of alleviation of poverty, also answers the multilateral organizations other development goals including women and youth literacy and empowerment. Microfinance has now become most popular and has been gaining lot of attention about its growth, innovation and impact. The microfinance industry has shown growth both in terms of clientele, Product type, and its service providers (Mehta & Aggarwal, 2014).

In South Africa, the cooperative movement dates back to the beginning of the 19th century when farmers began to organize themselves into agricultural societies in the four colonies of Natal, Cape Province, Transvaal and Orange Free State, the then provinces of the present day Republic of South Africa. In 1892 the first cooperative was founded in the colony of Natal, this was the Pietermaritzburg consumer cooperative. Soon cooperatives began thriving especially in the Cape Province: In 1907, there were already existing 53 cooperatives and 80 more were in the process of being established (Derr, 2013).

The first cooperative society in Kenya known as Lumbwa Cooperatives society was formed in 1908 by the European farmers. The main objectives of the cooperative was to purchase fertilizer, chemicals, seeds and other farm input, and then market their produce to make use of the advantage of economies of scale. Another Cooperative society Kenya Farmers Association was registered in 1930 to take over the role of supply of farm input played by Lumbwa cooperative society (Bwisa, 2010).

Savings and Credit Cooperative (SACCO) subsector is part of the cooperative industry in Kenya. The subsector has remained a significant player in provision of financial services to households and businesses. SACCOS have positively impacted on lives of several disadvantaged Kenyans over the years. The subsector may be divided into financial and non-financial cooperatives. The non – financial co-operatives deal with marketing of members’ produce and services that include: dairy, livestock coffee, tea, handicrafts and many more similar cooperatives. On the other hand financial co-operatives comprise SACCOS, housing and investment cooperatives (Ademba, 2013).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Good strategies that lack effective implementation can never be expected succeed. Strategy implementation is the most significant and yet very difficult part of strategic management process. Strategy and strategic choice of organization are valueless unless strategies are capable of being implemented (Nair, Banerjee, & Agarwal, 2009). A well thought formulated strategy in the world amounts to nothing if it is not properly or incorrectly implemented throughout the organization. The management of an organization will optimally be responsible for a strategy’s success or failure, their role should be to encourage and create organizational culture which empowers managers to respond to opportunities (Henry, 2011).

According Mumanyi (2014) statistics indicate that there are 10,800 registered cooperatives in Kenya with a membership of about 6 million out of this, 46% are agricultural, 38% are financial based (SACCOS) and 16 % are others. Further, 63% of Kenyan population depends on cooperative related activities for their livelihood. SACCOS subsector contributes to over 45% Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Kenya which benefits one out of two Kenyans directly or indirectly. The research problem should be addressed otherwise many Kenyans will have their benefits from SACCOS at stake.

1.3 Objective of the Study

To investigate the influence of strategic leadership on effective strategy implementation among SACCOS in Kenya

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical framework

2.1.1 Resource Based Theory

The resource based model assumes that every organization is a collection of unique resources and capabilities. The uniqueness of its capabilities is the base for a firm’s strategy and its ability to earn high returns. Not all firm’s resources and capabilities have the potential to be the basis for

competitive advantage. This potential is realized when resources and capabilities are valuable and rare, costly to imitate, and non substitutable (Ireland & Hitt, 2011). Resource based theory of strategy, emphasizes that the people element in strategy development highlight the motivation, the politics and cultures of the organization and the desires of individuals. It particularly focus on difficulties that can arise as new strategies are introduced that confront people with need for change (Lynch, 2009).

Midhani (2009) argued that The Resource Based View (RBV) analyzes and interprets internal resources of an organization and emphasizes resources and organization capabilities in formulating strategy to achieve sustainable competitive advantages. Resources are as inputs that enable firms to carry out its activities. Internal resources and capabilities will always determine strategic choices made by firms while competing in its external business environment. According to RBV, not all the resources of firm are strategic resources. Competitive advantage occur only when there is a situation of resource heterogeneity (different resources across firms) and resource immobility (the inability of competing firms to obtain resources from other firms).

Instead of seeing the industry as the source of profitability, the Resource-Based View of the firm argues that the attention should turn to the firm. Instead of finding profitability at the intersection of the products and markets, the Resource-Based View seeks for value derived from resource, capability and competency (Hax & Wilde, 2003). The Resource-Based View a firm is the strategic management theory that is widely used by managers in SACCO management. It allows managers to spread resources that include organization capability in accordance to alignment with strategy implementation, to identify the value of such resources and required organization capabilities for the competitive advantage of SACCOs in Kenya through leadership and innovation, especially organization management capabilities that have been customized to a specific SACCO environment and developed over time (Almarii & Gardiner, 2014).

2.2 Empirical Studies

Leadership is the quality of behaviour of a person whereby he is able to persuade others to seek group goals enthusiastically (Chhabra, 2008). On the other hand a leader is a person with credible leadership qualities that are needed to successfully lead an organization through the turbulence of our present world. Leadership is also the influence relationship in which one person whom is the leader influences the behavior of others who are followers in a given situation to work together on related tasks to attain what the former desires. Leadership is that part of manager's job by which he or she influences the behavior of his or her subordinates towards

desired goals (Quist, 2009). The characteristics of leadership are as follows: leadership is a process of influence; while the basic purpose of leadership is to influence the behaviour of followers; leadership is about interaction between the leader and followers; leadership implies pursuit of common goals in the interest of individuals as well as the group as a whole; and leadership is related to situation. Leadership is always related to a particular situation, at a given point of time and under a specific set of circumstances (Chhabra, 2008)

Leadership is critical in formulating and implementing strategy. Formulated strategies are nothing if not implemented efficiently. Leaders generally subdivide strategy formulation and implementation into five steps, while leadership an important element for whole strategy formulation process while the styles of leadership are as numerous as there are people (Bishop, 2012). Firstly, leaders are responsible to create vision that must match with the firm's values while such vision also must be supportive and understandable. The organization vision tells the strategist about future and values tells about the past. An important task for leadership is to make a distinction between vision and mission. Secondly, strategic leaders are responsible to set organizational goals and objectives especially their work is to define long term measurable objectives. Thirdly, leaders formulate the strategies that are suitable for the achievement of organizational goals and objectives. On the other hand leaders define also what would be most appropriate way to cope with situation requirement. Fourthly, leaders perform their primary function that is the implementation strategy. According to Sophocles "what you cannot enforce, do not command" because strategies are nothing if they can't be implemented efficiently and timely (Azhar, Ikram, Rashid, & Saqib, 2012). Visionary leadership and collaborative commitment of all employees of the organization promote success of strategic plans implementation (Thatia & Muthuri, 2014, Njagi, Muathe, & Muchemi, 2013).

A particular view of the role of leader follows from the claim that creative organizational strategies are more likely to emerge in more fluid, spontaneous from of conversation. Instead of understanding the role of leadership purely in terms of directing and exhorting followers, one comes to see leadership in perhaps humbler but no less skilful or important terms. Given the power relation of the leader to relation of the leader to others, he or she is in a particularly well – placed position to create opportunities well for conversation that may foster greater spontaneity. Such Spontaneity is likely to be fostered through the manner in which the leader handles a situation, encouraging others to create and shape the situation rather than simply giving instructions (Stacy, 2007).

Achieving organization success is not a chance or occurrence. It is largely determined by the decisions strategic leaders make. It is the responsibility of top managers to monitor the organization's internal and external environments, build company resources and capabilities,

track industry and competitive trends, spot emerging market opportunities, spot business threats, and generate a future vision that followers can believe in. Ideally, this series of activities makes up a major part of what is known as strategic leadership. It is hard to overstate, the importance of strategic leadership in today's dynamic and uncertain business environment (Achua & Lussier, 2010).

Diversity leadership is an attention to the social identities and larger socio cultural context of which leaders are a part as well the leader – member composition within different organization contexts (Chin, 2013). Leadership is all about responsibility. Responsible leadership ensures the effectiveness of strategic management process. It provides the base line for strategic thinking and by providing vision it directs the organization towards strategy formulation. The strategy formulation process tries to align the organization with the required change of environment. Then organization attention shifts towards the strategy implementation in which leadership's main focus is to achieve the vision by execution of formulated strategies (Azhar et al., 2012). Leadership is the ability possessed by some individuals that can influence others to behave and to do certain things as directed. Firm leadership is provided by the chief executive officer assisted by a team of managers. Leaders in an industry are strategists in their own right and make decisions on behaviour of stakeholders (Yabs, 2010).

Women have steadily emerged in leadership roles in all societal spheres since the 1970s. Women always bring to the exercise of leadership an arsenal of strengths, which are increasingly received to benefit the entities they lead on local, national, and global levels (Chandler, 2011). Women's leadership styles reflect more of transformational, participative, and inclusive than leadership styles of their male counterparts. Women bring diverse strengths, perspectives, and innovation to the exercise of leadership. Although women are filling more managerial positions, they have yet to emerge in the top executive leadership positions. (Chege, Wachira, & Mwenda, 2015). SACCOs also in Kenya have had women in their leadership.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used survey research design with both quantitative and qualitative research methodology. The reason for employing the surveys design is that it is important when the researcher is contacting relatively enormous numbers of people to obtain data on the same issue or issues, often posing the same question to all (Jankowicz, 2005). The target population of the study was all 176 Deposit Taking SACCOs in Kenya. The deposits taking SACCOs targeted for the study were the supervised and regulated by SASRA which are homogeneous in their operations. The study used simple random sampling to select respondents and a sample size of

192 respondents obtained. Data was collected using questionnaires. Descriptive statistics was presented, while the inferential statistics was done using Regression analysis.

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Demographic Data of the Respondents

A total of 192 questionnaires were administered to the respondents out of which 138 questionnaires were duly filled and returned successfully. This responds represented 71.8% response rate. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) consider that a response of 60% is good and a response of 70% and over as very good. The response rate of 71.8 % was deemed adequate since (Mapetere, Mavhiki, Nyamwanza, Sikomwe, & Mbonde, 2012) in a similar study had a response of 72%. The demographic data that was sought from the respondents included: age, gender, job category, academic qualification and work experience. All these were relevant in determining the influence of strategic leadership on effective strategy implementation as summarized in table 1. Majority of (55.1%) of the participants were aged between 31 to 40 years, the next (23.9%) of the respondents indicated that they belong to the 20-30 years age. The minority constituted (21%) of respondents indicated that they were 41 years age which is the active working age. The findings of gender of respondents revealed that majority (61.6%) of the population sampled indicated that they were male while (38.4%) were female. This signify that majority of the respondents in the study were male. The academic levels of respondents were varied and majority of (57.2%) of the respondents had attained undergraduate degree, while (27.6%) achieved masters degree and above while (14.5%) of them obtained diploma and (0.7%) certificate. This means that they had sufficient knowledge to answer the questionnaires.

Table 1: Respondents Demographic Data

	Response	Frequency	Percent
Age	20 – 30 Years	33	23.9
	31 – 40 Years	76	55.1
	Above 41 Years	29	21.0
	Total	138	100
Gender	Male	85	61.6
	Female	53	38.4
	Total	138	100
Education Level	Certificate	1	0.7
	Diploma	20	14.5
	Undergraduate	79	57.2
	Masters and Above	38	27.6
	Total	138	100
Job Category	Low Level Management	49	35.5
	Middle Level Management	47	34.1
	Top Level Management	42	30.4
	Total	138	100
	Work Experience	Up to 6 Months	3
Up to 1 Year		6	4.3
Up to 2 Years		24	17.4
Above 3 Years		105	76.1
Total		138	100

Regarding the job category, the findings indicate majority (35.5%) of the participants represented low level that included: Accountants and Customer Relationship Officers management. The next (34.1%) belong to the middle level management which includes: Branch Manager and Credit Manager, while (30.4%) were top management level which included: Chief Executive Officer, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Finance Manager, Operations Manager, and Head of Departments. On work experience of the respondents the findings indicate that majority (76.1%) of respondents revealed that they worked in the organization for more than three (3) years, the other (17.4%) respondents have worked in the organization for up to two (2) years, the other (4.3%) worked for one (1) year, while the minority (2.2%) have worked for only six (6)

months. The findings reveal that majority of respondents have worked for at least 3 years long enough to understand how the organization operate.

4.2 Descriptive Analysis

The respondent's views on the influence of strategic leadership sought and their responses presented in table 2. A five (5) point scale was used where (1 =Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 =Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree). The respondents were required to give their opinions on the Likert scale. Chi-square attempts to establish relationship between two variables both of which are categorical in nature. Chi-square technique is therefore a form of count occurring in two or more mutually exclusive categories. Each statement was subjected to chi-square test to establish the assumption of independence and the results were $p < .05$ significance. The findings of the study showed that all the statements representing influence strategic leadership had a percentage mean of 87.5% which indicates that respondents highly regarded the variable. From the 10 statements used to explain the analysis all had an overall percentage mean of 90% (46.02 + 43.80) agreed with the statements that strategic leadership influence strategy implementation among SACCOs in Kenya. The findings of the study is confirmed by the results of a study by (Kyalo, Katuse, & Kiriri, 2016) on the effect of organization leadership on strategy implementation in Kenya's tourism industry which reported a strongly positive relationship.

Table 2: Descriptive results

Statement	Strongly agree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	χ^2	P-value
Leaders are responsible in creating vision firm	0(0.0%)	2(1.4%)	2(1.4%)	63(45.7%)	71(51.4%)	123.39	.000
Leaders must understand and support org vision	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	3(2.2%)	51(37.0%)	84(60.9%)	72.13	.000
Vision inform leader about the future of organization	1(0.7%)	2(1.4%)	11(8.0%)	50(36.2%)	74(53.6%)	155.55	.000
Task of leader to distinct between vision and mission	0(0.0%)	1(0.7%)	18(13.0%)	69(50.0%)	50(36.2%)	81.88	.000
Responsibility of leader to monitor environment	1(0.7%)	2(1.4%)	20(14.5%)	61(44.2%)	54(39.1%)	117.14	.000
Leaders lead organizations thro turbulence in business	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	13(9.4%)	66(47.8%)	59(42.8%)	36.04	.000
Leaders provide strategic thinking to direct org. vision	0(0.0%)	1(0.7%)	18(13.0%)	67(48.6%)	52(37.7%)	79.91	.000
Leaders develop vision that stakeholders can adopt	1(0.7%)	0(0.0%)	6(4.3%)	82(59.4%)	49(35.5%)	127.56	.000
Strategic Leaders spot emerging market opportunities	0(0.0%)	1(0.7%)	20(14.5%)	68(49.3%)	49(35.5%)	77.24	.000
Visionary Leaders grows and improve the org. performance	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	17(12.3%)	58(42.0%)	63(45.7%)	27.69	.000

4.3 Inferential Statistics

The results in table 3 show that there is positive and significant influence between strategic leadership and effective strategy implementation among SACCOs in Kenya. A unit increase in Strategic leadership increases effective strategy implementation by 0.866 units. The p-value was less than 0.05 then there is sufficient evidence that supports rejection of the null hypothesis and conclusion that there is significant influence between effective strategy implementation and strategic leadership. The results of a study (Rajasekar, 2014) demonstrated that leadership is by far the most important factor influencing successful strategy implementation.

Table 3: Regression Model

Variable	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.
(Constant)	-.064	.114	-.561	.576
S. Leadership	.866	.030	28.387	.000

5.0 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Summary of Findings

The objective of the study was to investigate the influence of strategic leadership on effective strategy implementation among SACCOs in Kenya. Strategic leadership had positive and significant influence on effective strategy implementation among SACCOs in Kenya. An increase in Strategic leadership increases effective strategy implementation. The p-value was less than 0.05 then there is sufficient evidence that supports rejection of the (H_{02}) null hypothesis.

5.2 Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study on the the influence of strategic leadership on effective strategy implementation among SACCOs Kenya, the study hereby concludes that strategic leadership is a key determinant of effective strategy implementation among SACCOs in the country. Strategic leadership had positive and significant influence between strategy implementation and effective strategy implementation among SACCOs in Kenya

5.3 Recommendation

Strategic leaders ought to have sufficient knowledge on the internal and external environments of the organization in order to formulate and support the vision of the organization. Leaders must commit themselves to monitor the organizations environments and identify emergent market opportunities. Leaders should be able to lead organizations through turbulence of the modern business world. Furthermore, leaders ought to understand that achieving organization success is

not by chance or occurrence but through decisions based on organization goals. Leaders also must set objectives that influence and motivate staff to achieve such objectives.

5.4 Areas of Further Research

The study narrowed down to SACCOS in Kenya. Other studies should be conducted adopting other determinants of strategy implementation in other sectors of the economy of Kenya. The study relied more on primary data as the main source of data. Future studies should be subjected to the use of other data collection instruments which may include focus group discussion and interviews in order to generate detailed information that can help improve strategy implementation among savings and credit cooperative societies.

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