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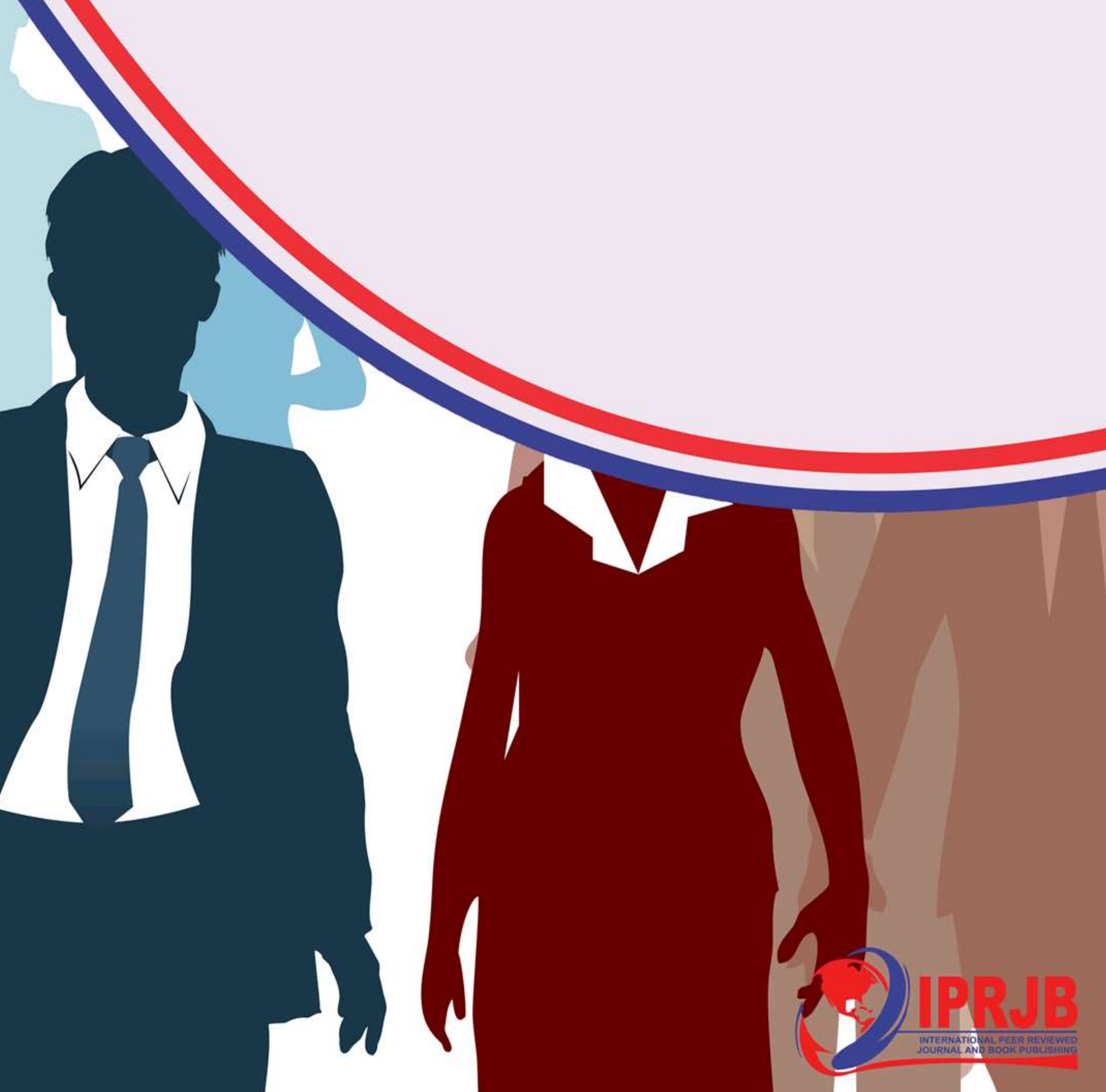

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Influence of Delegated Power on Performance of Rice Sector in Kenya

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to determine the influence of delegated power on performance of rice sector in Kenya.

Methodology: The study was anchored on the institutional theory. The target population of this study comprised of 185 farmer representatives (cooperative managers), 36 staff of research institutions (researchers) and 9 managers of National Irrigation Authority and 16 rice millers (managers) as the key stakeholders of rice growing in Kenya. The study sample size was 152 and study adopted multi-stage sampling whereas purposive, stratified and random sampling techniques were appropriate for drawing sample size. The data collection instruments were questionnaires and interview schedules. The qualitative data was analyzed by use of the content analysis, while quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS Version 27, for descriptive and inferential results. Both the arithmetic mean and standard deviation were used as statistical tools to measure central tendency and dispersion respectively.

Findings: The study revealed that delegated power has a statistically significant and positive relationship with rice sector performance. The descriptive results indicated majority of the respondents (mean= 4.03, standard deviation= 0.996) agreed that delegated power was among the stakeholder governance mechanisms employed in the rice sector in Kenya. The correlation results also revealed that delegated power and performance of rice sector in Kenya were positively and significantly associated ($r=0.838$, $p=0.000$). In addition, the regression results showed that delegated power explains 70.3% of the variations in performance (r-squared =0.703), making it a strong predictor of performance in Kenya's rice sector. The regression model was statistically significant ($F = 234.042$, $p < 0.05$), and delegated power had a positive and significant effect ($\beta=0.927$, $p=0.000$) on performance of rice sector in Kenya.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The management should give room for other stakeholders to make decisions by empowering them to make operational decisions. In addition, regular consultations and structured feedback mechanisms should be mandatory to improve transparency and collaboration.

Keywords: *Stakeholder Governance, Delegated Power, Performance*

JEL Codes: *G34, D73, L25*

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INTRODUCTION

Leadership, governance and the structure of any sector of an economy in a country affects the stakeholder's ability to respond to external factors that have some bearing on its eventual performance (Jeptoo & Karanja, 2017). Well-governed sectors largely perform better and that principle of good governance is of essence to performance in all sectors. Empirical studies have provided link between principles of stakeholders' leadership and governance and institution performance (Ndah et al., 2020; Watambe et al., 2021). To achieve vision 2030, influence of stakeholder participation in terms of effective stakeholders 'leadership and governance is key on matters relating to food security in Kenya (Otera, et al, 2018).

Food and nutrition security in Kenya remains a challenge, with 23% of rural households, including smallholder farmers, facing severe food insecurity (PAM, 2019). Rice is identified as a strategic crop to boost agricultural incomes, yet systemic constraints hinder its value chain potential (MAEP, 2018; Mano, Njeru & Otsuka, 2021). Current rice production meets only 20% of domestic demand, necessitating costly imports. Most rice is grown in irrigated schemes managed by the National Irrigation Authority, such as Mwea and Ahero, but water scarcity during droughts reduces productivity (Kenya Bureau of Statistics, 2020; Atera et al., 2017). Effective stakeholder leadership and governance are critical to addressing these challenges, promoting sustainability, and solving complex problems through collaboration and trust (Edit, Pant & Hickey, 2020; Ndah et al., 2020). Coordinated efforts between public and private sectors can enhance values and sustainability in Kenya's agricultural sector (Ontita & Kinyua, 2020).

While stakeholder participation through effective leadership and governance enables collaboration and interaction between the stakeholders in order to design new processes, it is very difficult to measure their impact because the achievements are often influenced by factors of the stakeholders' environment in which they operate (Waswa, 2018). Recent studies have attempted to develop frameworks for measuring the impact of stakeholder governance in different sectors (Watanabe, et al., 2021). However, the influence of delegated power in promoting performance of the food and agricultural sectors are not well known (Nyokabi, et al., 2018). Delegated power in governance refers to the formal transfer of decision-making authority from a higher governing body (such as a government, board, or executive leadership) to a lower entity (such as local governments, agencies, or stakeholder groups) (Waswa, 2018). This delegation enables more responsive and specialized decision-making while maintaining overall accountability to the higher authority. Does the existence of delegated power promote equitable and sustainable control of the stakeholder power structure to enhance performance of the rice sector, especially at local level? That is the question to which this study intends to answer by analyzing the stakeholder governance of the rice sector in terms of delegated power to improve its performance in Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

Effective stakeholder governance mechanisms can enhance Kenya's rice sector by promoting coordinated efforts among farmers, policymakers, researchers, and industry players to address inefficiencies in production and post-harvest handling (Kaloi et al., 2021). By implementing better storage, processing, and distribution strategies, these mechanisms can help reduce the significant post-harvest losses of 20-30% (IRRI, 2023). Additionally, strong governance fosters research-driven innovation, adoption of modern farming techniques, and access to financial and technical support, improving overall productivity. This, in turn, strengthens the sector's ability to meet the increasing domestic rice demand of 500,000 metric tons annually (GoK, 2023; KNBS, 2023). Ultimately, stakeholder engagement ensures sustainable growth, competitiveness, and food security in Kenya's rice industry.

However, the reality is that the rice sector in Kenya is underperforming (IFPRI, 2022; World Bank Report, 2022). While the potential for high production exists, actual domestic production remains low, averaging only 180,000 metric tons annually, far below the 500,000 metric tons needed to meet national demand. This gap results in substantial rice imports (GoK, 2023). Additionally, profitability has been inconsistent, with Profits before Tax (PBT) showing annual increases of less than 20% between 2011 and 2020. In some years, PBT even declined sharply, such as a 21.6% drop in 2018, following earlier decreases. Post-harvest losses continue to be high, ranging from 20-30% of total production (IRRI, 2023). These issues persist despite numerous efforts to reform the sector (Atenya & Nzulwa, 2018).

This underperformance impacts stakeholders across the rice sector. Farmers receive low returns on their investment, and workers face job losses as rice companies struggle or shut down. Furthermore, the government's efforts to ensure food security are thwarted, contributing to the country's ongoing food insecurity. The low level of investment and employment in the agricultural sector stunts economic growth and reduces potential tax revenue. Governance failures in Kenya's rice sector have profound effects on farmers, workers, and the government. For farmers, weak governance results in poor access to credit, inadequate extension services, and inefficient supply chains, leading to low yields and reduced profitability. Without proper post-harvest handling structures, farmers suffer significant losses, further discouraging investment. For workers, governance failures lead to unstable employment as inefficient mills and declining production force companies to downsize or shut down. Poor labor policies also result in exploitative wages and unsafe working conditions. For the government, weak regulation increases dependency on costly rice imports, undermining food security and economic growth while reducing tax revenue from the struggling domestic sector.

While previous studies have explored the role of stakeholder governance in various sectors, the unique challenges facing Kenya's rice sector remain underexplored. For instance, Chang et al. (2015) found that stakeholder governance helps firms increase efficiency by minimizing input costs, while Adiguzel and Zehir (2016) examined how competitive strategies affect stakeholder relationships. In Kenya, research by Kanyagia (2016) and Mano, Njeru, and Otsuka (2021) has focused on how competitive strategies address changing demand patterns, but these studies have not fully examined the impact of stakeholder governance mechanisms on the sector's performance. This study aims to fill this gap by evaluating how delegated power within stakeholder governance influences the performance of Kenya's rice sector.

Objective of the Study: To examine the influence of delegated power on the performance of the rice sector in Kenya.

Hypothesis of the Study: H_0: Delegated power does not significantly influence the performance of the rice sector in Kenya

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Collaborative governance theory, rooted in new institutionalism, is integral to stakeholder governance frameworks. Proponents such as Powell and DiMaggio (2012), March and Olsen (1983), North (1991), and Ostrom (1990) emphasize its systemic context, which includes

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embedded conditions like policy imperatives and intergovernmental relations alongside external drivers, enablers, and constraints (Emerson et al., 2015). This theory facilitates formal, consensus-oriented processes that engage public and non-state stakeholders in decision-making to achieve public purposes (Atenya & Nzulwa, 2018; Emerson et al., 2021). Empirical studies demonstrate its application in managing resource-based outcomes, such as irrigation service fees (Were, 2019), collective ecosystem management (Weru et al., 2018), and resolving stakeholder conflicts in community projects (Nyakio & Gore, 2018). The integrative framework for collaborative governance (IFCG) highlights interrelated dimensions like system context, governance regimes, and collaboration dynamics. Key collaborative components include principled engagement, shared motivation, and joint action capacity (Redos & Hefe, 2018; Kede & Yako, 2018). This framework is relevant for evaluating delegated power in the rice sector because it emphasizes system context, governance regimes, and collaboration dynamics, which are critical for understanding how power is transferred and exercised among stakeholders. By incorporating principled engagement, shared motivation, and joint action capacity, the framework enables analysis of how farmers, policymakers, and industry players interact to address sector inefficiencies. Additionally, IFCG accounts for institutional constraints, policy imperatives, and intergovernmental relations, providing a structured approach to assess whether delegated power enhances coordination, resource allocation, and decision-making effectiveness in achieving sustainable sector growth.

Conceptual Framework

Delegated Power

- Strategic Alliances
- Interorganizational partnerships
- Collaborative mechanisms

→

- **Performance of Rice Sector**
- Quantity of Yields/production
- Revenues
- Profits

Independent Variables **Dependent Variable**

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Empirical Review

Emammi et al. (2022), examined the impact of strategic alliance on firm performance among small entrepreneurial firms (SEFs) in the telecommunications industry. The study uses structural equation modelling to analyse primary data obtained from a sample of 74 small entrepreneurial firms in the telecommunications sector. The sample consists of the founders and upper-level management of small firms in the telecommunications industry in Iran. The study found out that strategic alliances significantly and positively impact partners' performance in terms of financial, operational, and organizational effectiveness among small entrepreneurial firms in the telecommunication sector.

Kamau (2020), study sought to investigate the effects of the strategic alliance practices on organization performance of selected energy companies in Kenya. The study adopted the balance score card (BSC) model, resource-based theory, knowledge and social exchange theory and transaction theory. The study used descriptive research design and conducted a cross sectional survey of employees in selected energy companies in Kenya. The target population of the study was 22 energy companies in which 88 respondents were selected through a sample. The results highlight that there was a positive relationship between the independent variables (knowledge transfer, market development, operational efficiency, technological advancement) and the dependent variable (organization performance). This is shown by values of p = 0.002, p = 0.001, p = 0.003) and p = 0.002 respectively. The study established that strategic alliance practices have an influence on the overall organization performance of selected energy companies in Kenya.

Wanjiku (2016), study was intended to establish the impact of delegated power on the performance of commercial banks in Kenya. A total of 42 commercial banks were studied. The study applied the questionnaires survey approach to collect data and the study achieved an 88% response rate. The respondents were human resource managers of the banks. For establishing a relationship, the study considered performance of commercial banks as the dependent variable while strategic partnership was treated as the independent variable. The findings were such that 54.7% of the variation in the performance of commercial banks is determined by the variation in delegated power while 45.3% is determined by other factors not analysed in this study. 65.9% of change in performance is also attributable to a unit change in partnership strategy. The results showed that strategic partnership provides a positive and meaningful impact on performance of commercial banks in Kenya.

Ngamau (2015), sought to establish the influence of delegated power on the performance of insurance companies. This research was conducted through a survey study targeting operation managers for the 51 insurance companies licensed by IRA to operate in Kenya. The study collected primary data by use of a questionnaire. Data collected was analyzed through descriptive statistics, multiple linear regressions was undertaken with a view of examining the cumulative effect of the independent variables (delegated power and effectiveness of delegated power) on the dependent variable (Organizational performance). Delegated power contributed towards organizational performance of the insurance firms in Kenya. Higher profitability, wider distribution of insurance products, higher retention rates of customers were some outcomes identified as a result of the partnerships between insurance companies and various partners. The results concluded that there is a positive influence of each independent variable on dependent variable with the other independent variables held constant. Just as delegated power in insurance improved profitability, product distribution, and customer retention in insurance companies, its application in rice farming can enhance resource allocation, production efficiency, and market linkages.

Muthoka and Oduor (2014), sought to examine the effects of strategic alliances on organizational performance: supermarkets and their alliances in Kenya. The objectives of the study were: to establish the effects of technological, production and marketing strategic alliances on the performance of supermarkets and their alliances in Kenya. The sample of the study entailed a study of all the five big supermarkets (Nakumatt, Ukwala, Naivas, Tuskys and Uchumi) and 95 of their strategic alliances. The empirical results of the study indicated that there was a strong, negative correlation between technological strategic alliances and performance. However, there was no statistically significant relationship between technological strategic alliances and performances among supermarkets and their alliances in Nairobi CBD. Correlation results indicated that there was a weak, negative effect between production, strategic alliances and performance, for the supermarkets while for supermarket alliances there was a large, positive effect between the two variables. There was a strong, positive effect between marketing strategic alliances and performance for the supermarkets while for supermarket alliances there was a medium, positive correlation between marketing strategic alliances and performance. The t- test analysis indicates that the relationship between strategic alliances and performance was statistically significant among the supermarkets and their alliances suggesting that strategic alliances positively increase performance.

Research Gaps

The reviewed studies highlight several research gaps. First, while strategic alliances and delegated power have been studied in various industries such as telecommunications (Emammi et al., 2022), energy (Kamau, 2020), banking (Wanjiku, 2016), insurance (Ngamau, 2015), and retail (Muthoka & Oduor, 2014), there is limited focus on their role in agriculture, particularly in Kenya's rice sector. Second, most studies assess firm performance using financial, operational, and organizational indicators, yet agricultural performance also depends on resource allocation, production efficiency, and market access, which remain underexplored. Third, studies like Muthoka and Oduor (2014) show inconsistent effects of strategic alliances across industries, signaling the need to contextualize findings within agriculture. Finally, while prior studies focus on organizational performance, there is a gap in understanding how delegated power and alliances affect sector-wide sustainability and resilience, necessitating further research in Kenya's rice industry.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a positivist philosophy, emphasizing factual, observable, and experimental knowledge derived from existing theories (Amuhaya et al., 2018). Descriptive and correlational research designs were employed, enabling exploration of delegated power mechanisms and their impact on the performance of Kenya's rice sector. Descriptive design highlighted sectoral characteristics and trends, while correlational design examined relationships between governance mechanisms and performance indicators, such as productivity and profitability (Cheruiyot et al., 2017; Orina et al., 2018). The study targeted 246 stakeholders, including cooperative managers, researchers, National Irrigation Authority staff, and rice millers, with a sample size of 152 determined using Slovin's formula (Kyalo et al., 2017). Sampling techniques included purposive sampling for specific groups and random sampling for farmers, ensuring representativeness and inclusivity (Gupta & Gupta, 2019). The study utilized primary and secondary data collection methods to investigate delegated power mechanisms in Kenya's rice sector. Primary data was collected using self-administered questionnaires designed to capture respondents' views on delegated power. The questionnaires included closed-ended questions rated on a 5-point Likert scale and were categorized into sections addressing independent and dependent variables. Interviews were also conducted to gain in-depth insights from managers and representatives. A pilot study tested the reliability and validity of the research instruments, employing Cronbach's Alpha and factor loading analyses. Secondary data was obtained from government reports, policy documents, and databases to validate primary data. Data analysis involved SPSS for quantitative analysis, manual coding for qualitative insights, and statistical tools like regression for hypothesis testing. Results were presented using tables, and charts, ensuring clarity. This comprehensive approach triangulated qualitative findings with statistical trends to enhance validity and provide a holistic understanding of delegated power influence.

RESULTS

Descriptive Results

The descriptive results indicate a generally positive perception of interorganizational collaborations in the rice sector, with an average mean of 4.03 and a standard deviation of

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0.996, suggesting strong agreement among respondents with some variability in responses. The highest-rated aspect (mean = 4.35, std = 0.88) emphasizes that interorganizational partnerships create real strategic options for firms, highlighting their long-term significance. Additionally, partnerships as a gateway to new technologies (mean = 4.23, std = 1.02) and their role in promoting rice farming technologies (mean = 4.19, std = 0.94) were highly rated, reflecting their perceived effectiveness. However, strategic alliances conforming to government regulations (mean = 3.77, std = 0.95) and collaborative ventures reducing post-harvest loss (mean = 3.90, std = 1.12) received relatively lower agreement, indicating areas that may require further strengthening. These findings underscore the importance of interorganizational collaborations in improving knowledge sharing, cost reduction, risk minimization, and technological advancement in the rice sector. To maximize these benefits, organizations should strengthen collaboration frameworks, particularly in resource mobilization, regulatory compliance, and post-harvest loss reduction, ensuring equitable and widespread advantages. By fostering well-structured partnerships, the rice sector can enhance innovation, competitiveness, and long-term sustainability.

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis for Delegated Power

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Moderately agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std Dev
1. There are adequate collaborative arrangements to enhance knowledge sharing on rice issues in the organization	3%	7.9%	9.9%	39.6%	39.6%	4.05	1.04
2. Our farm participates in interorganizational relationships to save costs	3%	8.9%	10.9%	46.5%	30.7%	3.93	1.02
3. There are adequate interorganizational relationships to promote rice farming technologies	0%	10.8%	3%	42.6%	43.6%	4.19	0.94
4. Our farm conducts collaborative ventures to reduce post- harvest loss rates	6.9%	0%	25.7%	30.7%	36.6%	3.90	1.12
5. The collaborative arrangements are conducted to enhance mobilization and allocation of resources	6.9%	1%	24.8%	25.7%	39.6%	3.92	1.15
6. Strategic alliance activities are conducted to conform to government regulations	3%	7.9 %	16.8%	53.5%	18.8%	3.77	0.95
7. Interorganizational partnerships decrease costs and increase flexibility, thereby minimizing risk.	1%	4%	17.8%	49.5%	27.7%	3.99	0.84
8. Interorganizational partnership is used as a window onto new technologies or development	4%	4%	6.9%	35.6%	49.5%	4.23	1.02
9. Interorganizational partnership is to create real strategic options for the firm	1%	5%	6.9%	35.7%	53.5%	4.35	0.88
Average						**4.03**	**0.996**

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Correlation Results

The correlation results reveal a strong positive and significant relationship between delegated power and performance in the rice sector (r = 0.838, p = 0.000), indicating that greater delegation of authority is associated with improved organizational performance. The significance level ($p < 0.05$) confirms the statistical validity of this relationship, suggesting that it is unlikely to have occurred by chance. A high correlation coefficient implies that when power is effectively delegated allowing employees and stakeholders to participate in decision-making, resource management, and strategic execution—organizational efficiency and productivity improve. These findings emphasize the importance of empowering stakeholders through delegation mechanisms to foster accountability, enhance decision-making speed, and improve operational outcomes. To maximize these benefits, organizations should implement structured delegation frameworks, clear role definitions, and capacity-building initiatives to ensure that delegated power is effectively utilized. Strengthening delegation practices can boost innovation, responsiveness, and overall performance, driving sustainable growth in the rice sector.

Table 2: Correlation Results

		Delegated Power	Performance
Delegated power	Pearson Correlation	1	.838**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
Performance	Pearson Correlation	.838**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	101	101

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

Regression Results for Delegated Power and Performance

The Table 3 below presented the model summary, analysis of variance (ANOVA) and the regression coefficients of capacity delegated power and performance. The regression results reveal that delegated power significantly influences the performance of the rice sector, with an R-squared value of 0.703, meaning that 70.3% of the variation in performance is explained by delegated power. The F-statistic (F = 234.042, $p<0.05$) confirms the overall model's significance, indicating that the predictor variable (delegated power) reliably explains performance variations. The regression coefficient for delegated power (B = 0.927, $p<0.05$) further suggests that a one-unit increase in delegated power leads to a 0.927-unit increase in performance. Additionally, the t-value (t = 15.298 >1.96) is greater than the critical t-value for a 95% confidence level, reinforcing the significance of the predictor. Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis is rejected, confirming that delegated power has a statistically significant and positive effect on performance of the rice sector in Kenya. These findings imply that empowering employees and stakeholders through structured delegation enhances efficiency, innovation, and decision-making, ultimately improving sector performance. Thus, policymakers and industry leaders should institutionalize effective delegation mechanisms to optimize performance outcomes.

Table 3: Regression Results for Delegated Power and Performance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.838[a]	.703	.700	.584846

a. Predictors: (Constant), Mean_Delegated_power

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	80.053	1	80.053	234.042	.000[b]
	Residual	33.862	99	.342		
	Total	**113.915**	**100**			

a. Dependent Variable: Mean_performance
b. Predictors: (Constant), Mean_Delegated_power

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Unstandardized Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.133	.244		.545	.587
	Mean_Delegated_power	.927	.061	.838	15.298	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Mean performance

Based on the regression results, the equation for predicting performance based on delegated power can be formulated as follows:

Performance=0.133+0.927(Delegated Power)

Where:

- 0.133 is the intercept, indicating the baseline performance when delegated power is zero.
- 0.927 is the regression coefficient, meaning that for every one-unit increase in delegated power, performance increases by 0.927 units.
- The model is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$, $t = 15.298$), confirming the strong influence of delegated power on performance.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The findings highlight a strong and significant positive relationship between delegated power and performance in the rice sector. The results suggest that empowering employees and stakeholders through structured delegation enhances decision-making, efficiency, and overall productivity. The analysis confirms that as decision-making authority is increasingly distributed, organizations experience improved operational outcomes and strategic execution. Therefore, the organizations in the rice sector should implement structured delegation frameworks to enhance decision-making, efficiency, and overall performance. This can be achieved by clearly defining roles and responsibilities, empowering employees at different levels, and fostering a culture of accountability and trust. Training programs should be introduced to equip employees with the necessary skills for effective decision-making. Additionally, management should establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure delegated power contributes positively to strategic goals. By strengthening delegation practices, organizations can improve productivity, adaptability, and long-term sector growth**.**

Ethics Statement

This study was carried out in accordance with the ethical standards of an institutional and/or a national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. Prior to the research, ethical approval was obtained from the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology. Every participant was required to read and sign an informed consent form before participating in the research.

Data Availability Statement

The data generated during and/or analyzed during the study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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