

## **MEDIATING EFFECT OF STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION ON THE NEXUS BETWEEN INTEGRATIVE LEADERSHIP AND PERFORMANCE OF COMMERCIAL STATE CORPORATIONS IN KENYA: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Kenya's commercial state corporations remain central to economic transformation under Vision 2030, yet many continue experiencing governance crises, financial instability, and operational inefficiencies despite repeated leadership reforms. The persistent bailouts of Kenya Airways and challenges at Kenya Power exemplify the gap between leadership capacity and sustainable performance. This study examined the mediating role of strategy implementation in the relationship between integrative leadership and organisational performance in Kenyan state corporations. Adopting a Systematic Literature Review approach, the study synthesises empirical evidence from 2018 to 2025 across Kenyan and international contexts. Findings reveal that integrative leadership encompassing transformational, transactional, and participatory practices creates enabling conditions including motivation, inclusivity, and accountability. However, leadership alone proves insufficient for organisational outcomes. Strategy implementation emerges as the critical mechanism translating leadership vision into measurable results. Evidence from Kenya shows execution is frequently undermined by political interference, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and weak accountability structures, whereas international cases demonstrate that institutionalised executional systems yield more consistent performance improvements. Theoretically grounded in the Full Range Leadership Model and Resource-Based View, the study frames executional capacity as a strategic resource that is valuable, rare, and

difficult to replicate. The analysis concludes that leadership and execution are interdependent drivers of performance. Practical recommendations include insulating corporations from political interference, embedding digital monitoring systems, institutionalising participatory governance, and strengthening accountability frameworks. Ultimately, the sustainability of Kenya's state corporations depends on bridging the vision–execution gap through institutionalised executional excellence.

**Keywords:** *Strategy Implementation, Integrative Leadership, Organisational Performance & Commercial State Corporations*

## INTRODUCTION

Leadership involves motivating people to achieve organizational objectives and translating strategic plans into implementable policies, programs, and operations (Taouab & Issor, 2019; Samimi, Cortes, Anderson, & Herrmann, 2022). Prior research in policy integration indicates that leadership is often the most lacking element in complex governance settings, frequently contributing to policy failure and reinforcing the need for integrative leadership approaches (Crosby & Bryson, 2018; Backhaus & Vogel, 2022). Integrative leadership refers to a collaborative, boundary-spanning process that brings together diverse actors, sectors, and resources to achieve shared goals, particularly in situations where no single organization can address challenges alone (Crosby & Bryson, 2018). It is often conceptualized as the opposite of siloed or autocratic leadership, emphasizing interdependence, shared decision-making, and joint problem-solving rather than unilateral control (Crosby & Bryson, 2018).

In organizational contexts, integrative leadership has also been examined as a multidimensional leadership style that blends transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire components, enabling flexibility across different strategic demands (Zhang, Sun, Liu, Zhou, & Zhang, 2018). Empirical studies show consistent positive effects of integrative leadership on performance outcomes. For example, in China, integrative leadership was found to significantly predict employee performance and collaborative effectiveness (Zhang, Lin, Liu, Zhang, & Li, 2021). In Indonesia, integrated leadership practices were associated with higher teacher job satisfaction, indicating improved organizational climate and relational quality among staff (Baharuddin, Amiruddin, & Idkhan, 2023). Similarly, research conducted in Poland demonstrated that organizational performance increased when integrative leadership was adopted, particularly due to enhanced cooperation and cross-functional coordination (Sobiecki, 2018).

In Saudi Arabia, Defalla, Mahmud and Choong (2022) revealed a positive association between transformational leadership and employee performance. In Nigeria, Akpotor (2018) found that industrial organisational performance was positively correlated with integrative leadership. Similarly, a study conducted in Kenya by Khaleji (2019) reported a statistically significant relationship between strategic leadership and strategy implementation. Further evidence from Kenya shows that strategic leadership significantly predicts organisational performance, as demonstrated in Wakhisi's (2021) study of state-owned sugar manufacturing firms in western Kenya. Nyaberi (2020) likewise identified a statistically significant relationship between leadership style and the performance of state corporations. Additional studies support the role of integrative leadership: Dahir, Kathula and Machoka (2023) found a significant association

between integrative leadership and performance, while Bonnyventure, Cheluget and Ngala (2022) reported a positive correlation between integrative leadership and organisational performance.

Moreover, studies have consistently linked leadership to strategy implementation and performance outcomes. Samimi, Cortes, Anderson and Herrmann (2022) argue that leadership is central to the strategic management process, influencing how organisational strategies are formulated and executed. Leadership also affects the development of an organisation's vision and mission, shaping its long-term direction (Tawse et al., 2019). Mubarak and Yusoff (2019) emphasise that leadership abilities, including motivation, teamwork development, coordination, and control, are essential for successful strategy implementation. In addition, Lei, Gui and Le (2021) highlight leadership's role in cultivating organisational culture by establishing, communicating, and modeling organisational values to enhance awareness and compliance. Lee and Welliver (2018) similarly found a positive link between leadership strategies and organisational performance. This body of evidence underscores the need for further research, given the limited empirical data examining the specific interactions among the variables in the current study.

### **Integrative Leadership**

Integrated leadership is understood as a dynamic, driving capacity that brings together diverse leadership attributes and strategic decision-making to build an effective organisation and accomplish desired outcomes (Zhang et al., 2018). According to Crosby and Bryson (2018), integrative leadership theories were largely developed by scholars examining leadership within the public sector. Integrative leadership is associated with multiple positive effects at individual, departmental, and organisational levels because it involves combining the abilities, expertise, and perspectives of people both within and beyond organisational boundaries (Crosby & Bryson, 2018). Although early groundwork can be traced to Yukl (1971) and Winter (1979), integrative leadership models gained increased prominence in the 1980s following Bass's (1985, 1996) development of the full-range leadership model (as discussed in Mango, 2018).

The integrative leadership framework conceptualises leadership as a comprehensive approach that begins with legislative mandates and encompasses all managerial functions necessary for achieving organisational goals (Morgan, 2020). This framework combines situational factors, moderating variables, leadership behaviours, traits, and styles to explain leadership effectiveness (Crosby & Bryson, 2018). Transformational leadership, which is central to integrative models, builds capacity through leader charisma, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration for followers (Wilson, 2020).

Leadership is required at all organisational levels and can be demonstrated even by individuals without formal authority (DuBrin, 2022). Despite ongoing reforms to enhance public service delivery, policymakers and public administrators continue to face significant challenges in fulfilling their mandates (Huang, 2020; Garikipati & Kambhampati, 2021). Although public administration research has extensively examined bureaucracy and governance, leadership styles, organisational structures, and public-sector performance remain comparatively understudied (Barsoum, 2018). Furthermore, while transformational and transactional leadership have been widely explored, increasing attention to responsibility, diversity, and employee relations has renewed scholarly interest in integrative leadership, thereby motivating the present study.

This study operationalised integrated leadership through the three leadership typologies identified in the updated full-range leadership (FRL) model, comprising transformational, transactional, and

laissez-faire leadership styles (Shaikh, 2018; Itzkovich, Heilbrunn, & Aleksic, 2020; Leigh, Lamont, & Cairncross, 2021; Sivarat, Thamma, & Kenaphoom, 2021).

### **Strategy Implementation**

Strategy implementation refers to the process of putting formulated strategies into practice through structured planning, allocation of financial resources, and managerial coordination (Ferlie & Ongaro, 2022). Effective strategy implementation is essential for achieving organisational performance goals and supporting long-term sustainability (Baini & Mwasiaji, 2018). Walter and Vincent (2018) similarly emphasise that organisational profitability and long-term viability depend on the efficient operationalisation of corporate strategy. Strategy implementation therefore, requires translating strategic plans into actionable initiatives through sound planning, responsible budgeting, and effective resource utilisation (Chankseliani, Qoraboyev & Gimranova, 2021). In addition, strategy implementation plays a crucial role in enabling an organisation to achieve its strategic goals, mission, and vision as intended (Mubarak & Yusoff, 2019).

To support effective implementation, Bourne, Melnyk & Bititci (2018) argue that establishing performance indicator systems is necessary for organisations to accurately assess outcomes and monitor progress. These indicators should be directly aligned with organisational strategies to maximise performance and ensure accountability (Habtoor & Hassan, 2018). Key elements that influence successful strategy implementation include organisational structure, culture, policies, financial resources, and clear lines of responsibility and accountability. Empirical studies consistently demonstrate a positive relationship between strategy implementation and organisational performance across both commercial and nonprofit settings (Baini & Mwasiaji, 2018; Walter & Vincent, 2018).

### **Organisational Performance**

Performance refers to the outcomes achieved by an institution relative to its expected results, goals, and strategic intentions (Contu, 2020; Muthuveloo, Keat & Teoh., 2022). It encompasses the overall efficiency, effectiveness, and success of an organisation in attaining its stated objectives (Taouab & Issor, 2019). Institutional success is shaped by multiple factors, including financial indicators, operational efficiency, customer satisfaction, employee engagement, innovation capacity, and service or product quality (Schmidt, 2018). Organisational performance is evaluated from both financial and non-financial perspectives. Financial performance relates to profitability, cost management, revenue growth, and overall financial health (Contu, 2020).

Performance can also be measured through broader organisational metrics such as market development, service or product quality, employee productivity, job satisfaction, and customer satisfaction (Koay & Muthuveloo, 2021). Traditionally, organisations emphasised financial measures; however, heightened competition and globalisation have increased the importance of non-financial performance indicators (Mio, Costantini, & Panfilo, 2022). As a result, performance indicators have been expanded to include product innovation, market share growth, customer satisfaction and retention, reduced production costs, improved internal process efficiency, increased sales and profitability, and enhanced quality standards (Kivistö, Pekkola & Lyytinen, 2019).

Extant research shows that organisational performance is positively associated with various leadership styles, including charismatic, visionary, ethical, and shared leadership (Khan, Khan, Gul, & Khan, 2020). However, existing evidence reveals a weak or inconsistent relationship between integrative leadership and organisational performance, highlighting the need for further empirical investigation. Consequently, the present study incorporates both financial and non-financial dimensions of organisational performance to provide a more comprehensive analysis.

### **Purpose of the Study**

To determine the mediating effect of strategy implementation on the relationship between integrative leadership and organisational performance.

### **THEORETICAL FOUNDATION**

This paper was anchored in the Full Range Leadership Model, which was further supported by the Higgins's Eight (8) S Model and the resource-based view theory.

#### **Full Range Leadership Model (FRLM)**

The Full-Range Leadership Model (FRLM) was originally conceptualised by Burns (1978) and subsequently developed by Bass and Avolio (1994). The FRLM extends a leader's influence beyond mere behaviour or observable actions, encompassing the broader impact of leadership on followers and organisational outcomes (Randolph, 2021). Proponents of the model argue that effective leaders integrate the three primary leadership philosophies - transformational, transactional, and passive-avoidant (*laissez-faire*) - into a cohesive approach (Zhu et al., 2019). The model categorises these leadership styles into nine specific components, examining the traits and behaviours associated with each (Gemeda & Lee, 2020). The current or updated FRL model focuses primarily on three typologies: transformational, transactional, and *laissez-faire* leadership styles (Shaikh, 2018; Itzkovich, Heilbrunn, & Aleksic, 2020; Sivarat, Thamma, & Kenaphoom, 2021; Leigh, Lamont, & Cairncross, 2021).

The application of FRL constructs allows leaders to adjust their styles to situational demands. For instance, transactional leaders can adopt transformational behaviours, such as nurturing follower potential or promoting innovative problem-solving, when the context requires it (Kindarto, Zhu, & Gardner, 2020). The theoretical framework underlying a fully operational FRL model suggests that leaders should complement their transactional approach with targeted transformational behaviours based on organisational challenges and situational concerns (Sivarat et al., 2020). Thus, the FRL model provides a robust framework for analysing how integrative leadership influences organisational performance.

#### **The Higgins's Eight (8) S Model**

The McKinsey 7S model, initially developed by Peters and Waterman (1982), served as the foundation for Higgins's (2005) Eight S's Model of strategy implementation. According to Higgins (2005), organisational performance is influenced by seven key elements consisting of structure, processes, systems, styles, people, resources, and shared values, which was later expanded into the Eight S's model by replacing skills with resources and adding strategy

performance as an explicit component. The model emphasises effectiveness and provides a framework for implementing cross-functional strategies (Cândido & Santos, 2018). Effective managers devote substantial time and attention to the operationalisation of their strategies, which enhances the likelihood of achieving organisational objectives (Echessa, 2020).

The Eight S's model has been widely applied in research examining the relationship between strategy implementation and performance. For example, Musangi, Ngui and Senaji (2023) investigated the mediating effect of strategy implementation on the relationship between employee motivation and performance. Similarly, Nwachukwu et al. (2019) utilised the model to explore how strategy implementation affects organisational performance. Previous studies have also identified common barriers to successful strategy implementation, including unclear strategies, insufficiently skilled personnel, poor communication, employee resistance to change, limited resources, time constraints, inconsistent behaviours, inadequate action plans, and insufficient training and teamwork (Köseoglu, Altin, Chan, & Aladag, 2020).

Despite its utility, the Eight S's model has received criticism for several shortcomings. These include an underemphasis on the external environment, limited consideration of all relevant organisational components, lack of explicit definitions of organisational effectiveness or performance, insufficient empirical validation, and challenges in accurately measuring performance or effectiveness (Higgins, 2005). Nevertheless, this study adopts the Eight S's model to explain the relationship between strategy implementation and organisational performance, supplemented by additional theoretical frameworks to address its limitations.

### **Resource-Based View Theory (RBV)**

The Resource-Based View (RBV) theory was initially proposed by Wernerfelt (1984) and later extended by Barney (1991) to explain how firms achieve competitive advantage through their internal resources (Barney, 1991; Penrose, 1959). The RBV posits that enterprises compete based on their unique competencies and resources, which can provide a foundation for sustained success (Ferreira & Fernandes, 2017). According to the theory, a company's competitive advantage arises from resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (Nason & Wiklund, 2018). These resources enable a firm to create value in ways that competitors cannot easily replicate, providing a source of sustainable competitive advantage (SCA) when rival firms are unable to imitate or acquire them (Yewei & Pereira, 2022; Varadarajan, 2023).

A firm's SCA is determined by its distinctive, valuable, rare, non-replaceable, and inimitable resources and capabilities. Scarcity occurs when resources are highly sought after but not readily accessible to competitors. Organisational resources play a critical role in enabling firms to develop and implement strategies that enhance efficiency and effectiveness (Ritter & Lettl, 2018; Donnellan & Rutledge, 2019). The RBV further asserts that a firm's ability to leverage these resources effectively is directly linked to its competitive advantage and overall performance (Shan, Luo, Zhou, & Wei, 2019; Lubis, 2022). While the RBV has faced criticism for being potentially untestable, incomplete, or tautological, it remains a valuable framework for understanding how managers can harmonise organisational resources to achieve superior performance outcomes.

## EMPIRICAL REVIEW

### Integrative Leadership and Organisational Performance

Using an empirical review approach Khan (2024) studied the effect of integrating leadership styles on high-performance work systems. Servant and transformational leadership was found to have a significant relationship with performance. The study was done in Pakistan and hence the result cannot be applied to organizational performance of commercial state corporations in Kenya. The current study will be conducted among commercial state corporations in Kenya. Using a cross-sectional survey, Bonnyventure et al. (2022) study indicated a positive link between integrative leadership and performance. Strategy implementation had a significant partial mediating effect. Sixty airfields were surveyed using structured questionnaires to obtain quantitative data. Considering the focus was on airfields, it highlighted contextual gaps. This research will be conducted in Kenya among commercial State corporations.

A study by Sibiya (2023) examined the link between integrative leadership approaches and employee engagement and revealed a positive correlation. The study employed mixed methods in getting qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data was obtained through interview schedules, whereas the quantitative data was collected through structured questionnaires. However, because the study was a case study, it showed a methodological gap. This research will be conducted in Kenya among commercial State corporations.

### Strategy Implementation and Organisational Performance

There has been a need to establish on the connection between strategy implementation and organisational success (Goldstein, 2018). A well-executed strategy has a significant impact on an organisation's performance and is necessary to attain operational efficiency, which results in the realisation of organisational effectiveness (Agaba, Bosco & David, 2023). Any organisation's ability to survive depends on its ability to implement strategies effectively. Many businesses are unable to sustain their competitive advantages even when they have a robust strategy generation process because they lack the processes required to implement the strategies (Ntoiti & Makau, 2022). Management involvement is necessary for organisations to achieve the targeted implementation since the managers improve strategy implementation success (Masya, Wamitu, & Weru, 2022). Businesses having significant management engagement outperformed those with little management involvement when it came to the success rate of their strategic implementation decisions (Kiugu & Shadrack, 2021). Given the higher failure rates in strategy implementation, executives ought to focus more on carrying out the plan. Ntoiti and Makau (2022) state that effective strategy implementation significantly affects organisational performance and is necessary to achieve operational efficiency, which in turn results in the realisation of organisational effectiveness.

Using a case study approach, Agaba et al. (2023) study revealed a positive significant relationship between strategy implementation and organizational performance. The study used both qualitative and quantitative data which was then analysed through descriptive and inferential methods. The study was done among Savings and Credit Co-operatives (SACCOs) in Uganda. The study however indicated a conceptual gap since strategy implementation was considered as an independent variable whereas this study will consider strategy implementation as a mediating variable. Using a descriptive research design, Onyebula, Nwoye and Daniel (2023) examined the

role of strategy implementation on performance and revealed a significant relationship between the study variables. The study was conducted among the financial sectors in Nigeria. Inferential and descriptive statistics were used to analyse the qualitative and quantitative data which was obtained through the questionnaires. A contextual gap was evident since the study was carried out in Nigeria. This study will be carried among commercial state corporations in Kenya.

The study by Nuwagaba, Joseph, Angima, and Machuki (2022) employed a cross-sectional research methodology and found that strategy implementation had a partial significant mediation influence on the association between top management team (TMT) characteristics and performance across Ugandan state agencies. Only primary data, gathered using closed-ended, structured questionnaires was used. Positivist research philosophy was espoused. The study considered top management team as an independent variable thereby exhibiting a conceptual gap. This study will use integrative leadership as an independent variable.

### **Integrative Leadership, Strategy Implementation and Organizational Performance**

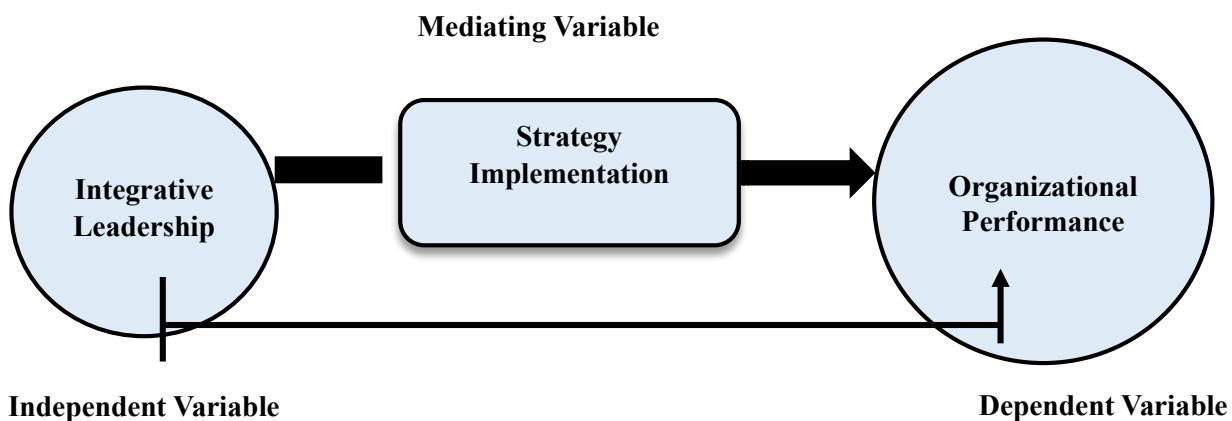
Using a longitudinal case study, Sobiecki (2018) found a statistically significant relationship between integrative leadership and performance management. Annual performance scores were collected as panel data from 2015 to 2016. By employing both the null and alternative hypotheses, the study highlighted a methodological gap. In contrast, the current study will utilise a cross-sectional design and determine the link between variables using the null hypothesis approach. Botha and Aleme (2023), employing an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, found a significant relationship between integrative principals' leadership behaviour and student academic outcomes using closed-ended questionnaires. However, as the study focused on academic performance in Ethiopian secondary schools, a conceptual gap exists, which the current research addresses by focusing on commercial state corporations in Kenya.

Mati and Atikiya (2022) investigated the relationship between strategy implementation practices and performance in Kenya's aviation industry. Data collected via questionnaires were analysed descriptively, and Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to assess the linear relationship. A conceptual gap was noted because strategy implementation was treated as an independent variable, whereas in this study it will be considered as a mediating variable. Similarly, Kobuthi, K'Obonyo and Ongut (2018) found a significant mediating effect of strategy implementation on the relationship between corporate governance and performance using a cross-sectional design. Data were collected from firms listed on the Nairobi Stock Exchange and analysed through regression analysis. Since corporate governance was treated as the independent variable, a conceptual gap exists, which the current study addresses by examining integrative leadership as the independent variable.

Ndegwa (2022), using a cross-sectional design and positivist methodology, found a significant relationship between strategy implementation and the performance of Kenyan state-owned corporations. Data were collected via structured questionnaires. The study presented a conceptual gap by treating strategy implementation as an independent variable, whereas this study will treat it as a mediating variable. Nuwagaba, Angima, Namateefu and Mugizi (2023), using a cross-sectional design, found a significant correlation between strategy implementation and the performance of Ugandan state agencies. Data were collected through questionnaires and analysed using multilinear regression analysis. Since the study was conducted in Uganda, a contextual gap exists. The current research will focus on commercial state corporations in Kenya.

Finally, Obiero and Genga (2018) found that strategy implementation significantly influenced the performance of the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA). The study employed a census approach with closed-ended survey tools and descriptive analysis. The use of a census revealed a methodological gap, which this study addresses by employing a cross-sectional survey methodology to assess the performance of commercial state corporations in Kenya.

### Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1: Conceptual Model**

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to examine the mediating effect of strategy implementation on the relationship between integrative leadership and organisational performance in Kenyan commercial state corporations. The use of SLR is justified by its methodological rigor, transparency, and replicability in synthesising empirical evidence across diverse contexts (Gulaid, 2024). Unlike narrative reviews, which are prone to subjectivity, SLR follows a structured protocol that ensures a comprehensive and unbiased account of the existing body of knowledge. This approach is particularly relevant in exploring the leadership–strategy–performance nexus, where fragmented findings necessitate integration to reveal both theoretical clarity and empirical patterns.

The review process was guided by three key research questions: (1) What theoretical foundations explain the relationship between integrative leadership and organisational performance? (2) How has strategy implementation been empirically tested as a mediator? (3) What evidence exists from comparable public-sector contexts that may inform the Kenyan case? To address these questions, a systematic search was conducted across multiple academic databases, including Web of Science, Scopus, ProQuest, and ScienceDirect. Grey literature, such as doctoral theses and government policy reports, was also considered to strengthen contextual understanding. This inclusive approach aligns with recommendations from recent reviews emphasising the importance of combining academic and applied evidence to capture the complexity of leadership and strategy in state-owned enterprises (Echongu & Njagi, 2022).

The review process was guided by the PRISMA 2020 statement (Page et al., 2021), beginning with the identification of relevant studies, the removal of duplicates, and the assessment of eligibility

based on predefined inclusion criteria (Page et al., 2021). Only empirical studies that explicitly addressed leadership, strategy implementation, and performance outcomes were retained, while purely conceptual works were excluded. The quality of the selected studies was appraised using established methodological checklists to ensure rigor and reliability. Data extraction focused on theoretical frameworks used, research design, measurement of variables, and key findings. This structured process enabled a thematic synthesis of evidence along three dimensions: (1) the direct influence of integrative leadership on organisational performance, (2) the relationship between integrative leadership and strategy implementation, and (3) the mediating role of strategy implementation in translating leadership into performance outcomes.

The review highlights several consistent patterns. First, integrative leadership, often expressed through participative, ethical, or transformational practices, has been shown to enhance organisational performance by promoting collaboration, trust, and alignment with strategic objectives (Agazu, Kero, & Debela, 2025; Khassawneh & Elrehail, 2022). Second, such leadership styles play a critical role in facilitating effective strategy implementation, particularly by mobilising resources, building consensus, and fostering accountability across organisational levels (Khassawneh & Elrehail, 2022). Third, empirical evidence suggests that the relationship between leadership and performance is often mediated by the quality of strategy execution, with leadership shaping implementation processes that, in turn, drive outcomes (Kitur, Awino, Omar, & Njihia, 2025; Mwangura & Muthimi, 2023; Kanyanja & Muathe, 2023; Ferede, Endawoke, & Tessema, 2024). However, most studies are concentrated in private-sector and Western contexts, while research on African state-owned corporations remains limited. This gap underscores the contribution of the present study, which extends the application of global evidence to Kenyan commercial state corporations.

The adoption of SLR as a methodological framework enabled the study to consolidate dispersed empirical findings, anchor the investigation in established theoretical perspectives such as the Resource-Based View and Upper Echelons Theory, and expose gaps in the literature that justify the Kenyan context. By systematically linking integrative leadership, strategy implementation, and organisational performance, the SLR provides both a robust evidence base and a clear rationale for the empirical phase of this research.

## **DISCUSSION**

The evidence examined underscores the central role of integrative leadership in shaping organisational outcomes, while also highlighting the limitations of treating leadership as a direct determinant of performance. Integrative leadership, which blends transformational vision, transactional accountability, and participatory inclusivity, is increasingly considered essential for complex public organisations that must balance competing demands. Studies in Kenya confirm that such leadership styles are positively associated with performance in state corporations (Dahir, Kathula, & Machoka, 2023), while global evidence from Indonesia, Poland, and Nigeria affirms the universality of these dynamics (Baharuddin et al., 2023; Sobiecki, 2018). However, emerging scholarship indicates that leadership effects often materialise indirectly, with strategy implementation serving as the critical mediating mechanism (Bonnyventure et al., 2022).

Leadership is most effective when it enhances executional capacity. Leaders shape organisational vision and culture, but their influence becomes impactful when they mobilise resources, foster alignment, and ensure ownership of strategic plans. Empirical findings from Kenya support this

view, with Khaleji (2019) and Wakhisi (2021) showing that strategic leadership directly influences the success of plan implementation in state corporations. Samimi et al. (2022) similarly demonstrate that leadership effectiveness extends beyond formulation into executional processes, suggesting that leadership should be reconceptualised not merely as an inspirational force but as an operational enabler of disciplined execution. The review also highlights the decisive role of strategy implementation as the bridge between leadership and organisational outcomes. Evidence indicates that even the most well-formulated strategies fail without strong implementation mechanisms (Ntoiti & Makau, 2022). Ugandan studies by Nuwagaba et al. (2022) corroborate this, showing that execution rather than formulation determines the efficiency of public agencies. Within Kenyan state corporations, Ndegwa (2022) similarly demonstrated that performance depends on robust executional practices. These findings reaffirm that in contemporary organisations, execution itself constitutes strategy, and performance is realised through operational discipline rather than intent alone. Mediation studies further substantiate this dynamic. Kobuthi et al. (2018) revealed that execution mediated the governance–performance relationship among Kenyan listed firms, while Musangi, Ngui and Senaji (2025) showed that implementation partially mediated the relationship between employee motivation and hospital performance.

The theoretical resonance of these findings with the Full Range Leadership Model (FRLM) and the Resource-Based View (RBV) is significant. The FRLM provides a framework for understanding leadership behaviours that combine inspiration with accountability and flexibility, which are crucial for fostering execution (Zhu et al., 2019). The RBV positions leadership capabilities and executional processes as rare, valuable, and inimitable resources that underpin sustained competitive advantage (Varadarajan, 2023). In Kenyan state corporations, where institutional weaknesses constrain performance, such capabilities constitute critical organisational assets. Nonetheless, execution in Kenyan state corporations is often undermined by persistent barriers, including bureaucratic inertia, political interference, and weak accountability structures (Echongu & Njagi, 2022). Köseoglu et al. (2020) emphasise that such obstacles undermine even well-designed strategies, highlighting that effective execution is not merely a technical matter of systems and processes but also an institutional challenge requiring integrative leadership capable of navigating complexity, aligning stakeholders, and sustaining momentum amidst political pressures.

The synthesis of reviewed studies establishes that strategy implementation plays a decisive mediating role in the relationship between integrative leadership and organisational performance. While integrative leadership - encompassing transformational, transactional, and participatory dimensions, is widely associated with improved outcomes, evidence consistently demonstrates that leadership alone does not directly drive performance. This finding resonates strongly in the Kenyan context, where persistent underperformance in state corporations underscores the gap between leadership capacity and executional follow-through (Ndegwa, 2022; Nyamai et al., 2025).

Empirical studies in Kenya support this mediated relationship. For example, Khaleji (2019) found that leadership influenced performance primarily through the alignment of strategies with resources and accountability mechanisms. Wakhisi (2021) similarly observed that leadership in state-owned sugar firms was most effective when leaders ensured clear communication and operational follow-through. Nyamai et al. (2025) confirmed that strategy implementation partially

mediated the relationship between employee motivation and hospital performance, demonstrating that execution is the pathway through which leadership intentions materialise.

At the global level, comparable patterns emerge. Botha and Aleme (2023) showed in Ethiopian schools that integrative leadership enhanced outcomes primarily through executional capacity, while Nuwagaba et al. (2022) documented that Ugandan state agencies achieved efficiency only when leaders prioritised executional frameworks. In European contexts, Mio et al. (2022) found that institutional structures amplified the effects of leadership by embedding execution into governance frameworks. These studies reinforce the universality of strategy implementation as a mediator while highlighting contextual variations in institutionalisation. A notable convergence is that leadership effects are rarely linear. Their impact is contingent upon effective strategy execution. In Kenya, bureaucratic inertia and political interference frequently disrupt execution (Echongu & Njagi, 2022), whereas in Europe, challenges often revolve around balancing competing stakeholder demands (Mio et al., 2022). Despite these differences, execution remains the vehicle through which leadership translates into performance.

Contradictions also emerge. While studies in high-performing contexts emphasise leadership vision and participatory practices as sufficient to inspire execution (Baharuddin et al., 2023), Kenyan evidence suggests that even visionary leadership can fail without adequate resources, institutional autonomy, and accountability systems (Ndegwa, 2022). This indicates that in resource-constrained environments, execution requires not only leadership direction but also systemic reforms to ensure sustainability. The review further shows that performance should be understood as multidimensional. While financial indicators remain important, non-financial outcomes such as innovation, accountability, and employee engagement are equally crucial (Mio et al., 2022). More studies echo this, with Sobiecki (2018) documenting how integrative leadership in Polish firms enhanced innovation through effective execution. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that leadership and execution jointly shape both financial and non-financial aspects of organisational performance.

The theoretical implications are significant. The FRLM provides a framework for explaining how leaders integrate transformational inspiration, transactional accountability, and participatory inclusivity to foster conditions conducive to execution (Zhu et al., 2019). The RBV complements this by framing executional capacity as a strategic resource that is valuable, rare, and difficult to imitate (Varadarajan, 2023). Together, these perspectives underscore why execution is not a routine administrative process but a strategic resource essential for sustained performance. The Kenyan case provides a useful context for applying these theories. While FRLM explains how integrative leadership behaviours influence culture and motivation, the RBV highlights why many Kenyan corporations struggle due to weak institutionalised executional capacity. Political interference and bureaucratic inefficiencies erode this capacity, making it difficult for leadership vision to translate into performance outcomes. Addressing these gaps requires strengthening executional frameworks while cultivating integrative leadership.

Comparative timeframes of effect offer additional insight. International studies often document shorter feedback loops between leadership interventions, execution, and performance outcomes (Samimi et al., 2022). Kenyan state corporations tend to experience longer delays due to bureaucratic procedures and political considerations, explaining why reforms often fail to yield

immediate results. Sustained leadership commitment is therefore critical in these contexts. The quality of execution is as important as its presence. Weakly executed strategies create a “strategy–performance paradox,” where ambitious visions fail due to poor follow-through (Ntoiti & Makau, 2022). In Kenya, Mati and Atikiya (2022) found that strategy formulation is often prioritised over implementation, resulting in recurrent underperformance. Cross-country comparisons, such as those by Köseoglu et al. (2020), show that integrated formulation and execution in developed economies improve performance outcomes.

Finally, conclusion, the review confirms that strategy implementation is the decisive mediator between leadership and performance. Leadership sets the vision and mobilises stakeholders, but execution delivers results. In the Kenyan context, reforms in state corporations must focus not only on leadership development but also on institutionalising executional excellence. International comparisons reinforce that performance is achieved when visionary leadership is coupled with disciplined and accountable execution.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that integrative leadership exerts its greatest influence on organisational performance through the mediating mechanism of strategy implementation. The evidence demonstrates that leadership behaviours, whether transformational, transactional, or participatory, create enabling conditions such as motivation, accountability, and inclusivity. However, these leadership effects remain incomplete unless translated into tangible organisational outcomes through disciplined execution. Thus, strategy implementation serves as the operational bridge between leadership vision and performance results.

The Kenyan context provides particularly strong evidence of this mediating effect. Despite the presence of capable leaders, many commercial state corporations continue to underperform due to weak executional systems. Bureaucratic delays, political interference, and resource misalignment have consistently undermined performance (Echongu & Njagi, 2022; Ndegwa, 2022). This underscores that leadership reforms alone are insufficient unless accompanied by institutional strengthening to support execution. The gap between leadership vision and organisational results in Kenya highlights the central importance of embedding implementation capacity within state corporations.

International comparisons reinforce this conclusion. Studies across Ethiopia, Uganda, and Poland indicate that leadership interventions only generate performance outcomes when institutionalised within executional frameworks (Botha & Aleme, 2023; Nuwagaba et al., 2022; Sobiecki, 2018). By contrast, evidence from resource-rich or high-performing economies suggests that strong leadership vision can more readily catalyse executional excellence (Samimi et al., 2022). These cross-country insights reveal both the universality of the mediating role of execution and the context-specific barriers that must be addressed in lower-capacity environments such as Kenya.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in integrating the Full Range Leadership Model (FRLM) and the Resource-Based View (RBV). The FRLM explains how integrative leadership behaviours foster motivation, direction, and alignment, while the RBV situates executional capacity as a strategic resource that is valuable, rare, and inimitable (Varadarajan, 2023). Together,

these frameworks illustrate why strategy implementation is not merely an administrative task but a core strategic capability through which leadership delivers sustainable performance. The Kenyan evidence highlights how the absence of this capability weakens the performance impact of leadership.

Another important conclusion is that performance should be understood holistically. Financial outcomes such as profitability and revenue remain important, but non-financial outcomes - including innovation, stakeholder trust, and organisational culture - are equally critical (Mio et al., 2022). In the Kenyan case, public accountability and service delivery represent key dimensions of performance, reflecting the dual commercial and developmental mandates of state corporations. Execution ensures that leadership vision translates into outcomes that balance financial sustainability with public value creation.

The study further concludes that the sustainability of leadership effects depends on the institutionalisation of executional practices. Transformational leadership can generate short-term enthusiasm, but without transactional reinforcement and participatory inclusivity, the long-term translation of leadership into performance is limited (Zhu et al., 2019). This insight explains why many Kenyan corporations experience initial gains following leadership reforms, only to relapse into inefficiency. Sustained performance requires systems that institutionalise execution beyond the tenure or charisma of individual leaders.

Participatory leadership also emerges as a critical yet context-dependent factor. While evidence shows that inclusive leadership strengthens execution by fostering stakeholder buy-in (Dahir et al., 2023), in Kenya, this effect is often moderated by political interference and resource scarcity. Participatory approaches must therefore be accompanied by governance reforms that create genuine space for stakeholder contributions; without such systemic support, participatory leadership risks degenerating into tokenism rather than reinforcing execution.

Ultimately, this study concludes that leadership and execution are not competing drivers of performance but mutually reinforcing elements of a single process. Leadership provides the vision and behavioural impetus, while execution delivers the operational discipline necessary for results. In Kenyan state corporations, sustainable transformation requires a dual focus: cultivating integrative leadership practices while simultaneously institutionalising executional excellence. Only by bridging this vision-execution gap can these organisations achieve both commercial viability and public accountability.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the evidence synthesised in this review, several recommendations emerge for policymakers, managers of state corporations, and scholars interested in the intersection of leadership, strategy, and organisational performance. These recommendations aim to strengthen both leadership capacity and institutional systems of execution, recognising their interdependence as drivers of sustainable performance.

First, Kenyan state corporations should institutionalise strategy implementation frameworks that emphasise accountability, monitoring, and feedback. Current reforms have often prioritised

leadership appointments and board restructuring without addressing systemic executional gaps. By embedding performance management tools such as balanced scorecards, regular audit mechanisms, and digital dashboards, organisations can ensure that strategic intent is consistently translated into measurable outcomes. This approach would help bridge the gap between leadership vision and executional discipline.

Second, leadership development programmes in state corporations must adopt a more integrative focus. Traditional leadership training in Kenya often emphasises transformational qualities such as vision and charisma while neglecting transactional and participatory dimensions. Evidence indicates that sustainable performance requires leaders who can inspire, enforce accountability, and foster inclusivity simultaneously. Leadership curricula should therefore reflect the Full Range Leadership Model, preparing leaders to cultivate cultures of executional excellence.

Third, reforms should address governance structures that undermine execution. Political interference, bureaucratic delays, and unclear mandates frequently erode leaders' capacity to deliver results. Clearer governance frameworks that insulate corporations from excessive political patronage and streamline decision-making are essential. Lessons from Uganda and Ethiopia demonstrate that institutionalising execution mechanisms within governance systems yields better results than relying solely on leadership charisma. Kenya can adapt these lessons to its own institutional realities.

Fourth, performance in Kenyan state corporations should be reconceptualised beyond financial outcomes to include non-financial dimensions such as innovation, service delivery, and public accountability. Given their dual commercial and developmental mandates, these corporations must balance financial viability with social impact. Strategy implementation frameworks should therefore integrate non-financial performance indicators, aligning execution with both organisational sustainability and public value creation.

Fifth, the adoption of digital tools and technologies should be accelerated to strengthen execution. Global evidence demonstrates that digitalisation enhances monitoring, coordination, and feedback loops, thereby improving executional accountability. Kenyan corporations lag in this regard, often relying on manual and bureaucratic processes. Investment in digital systems can reduce inefficiencies and increase transparency, ensuring that execution keeps pace with leadership vision.

Sixth, participatory practices should be institutionalised to ensure meaningful stakeholder engagement. While integrative leadership can foster inclusivity, systemic barriers often limit stakeholder influence in Kenya. Corporations should establish formal structures for stakeholder consultation in strategy formulation and execution, ensuring that participation is substantive rather than tokenistic. This approach builds trust, reduces resistance, and strengthens alignment between leadership vision and executional action.

Seventh, the sustainability of leadership effects requires continuity in executional systems beyond individual leaders. Reforms should prioritise institutional capacity-building over reliance on charismatic or transformational figures. Establishing independent strategy units within

corporations, staffed with professionals trained in execution, can ensure that organisational performance does not depend solely on leadership transitions.

Finally, for scholars, further empirical research is recommended to examine the specific mechanisms through which execution mediates the leadership–performance relationship in Kenyan contexts. Longitudinal studies tracking reforms over time, as well as comparative studies across African state corporations, would provide deeper insights into the durability and universality of execution as a mediating factor. Such research would refine theoretical models and strengthen evidence-based policymaking.

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