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STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT DRIVERS AND ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS IN LIVELIHOOD SECTOR, SAMBURU COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: The study assessed the effect of strategic direction, strategic innovation, strategic communication and organizational culture on the performance of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the livelihood sector in Samburu County, Kenya.

Statement of the problem: NGOs in Samburu County have experienced declining performance despite strategic management efforts, with donor numbers falling by 10% and more than 30% of projects failing to deliver the intended outcomes to local communities. The freeze of United States foreign assistance in 2025 further disrupted essential programmes in health, water, food security and climate adaptation. The NGO sector has nevertheless attracted limited research on how strategic management drivers influence organizational performance.

Research methodology: The study adopted a descriptive research design guided by Strategic Contingency Theory, the Resource Based View, Strategic Communication Management and Organizational Culture Theory. A pilot tested structured questionnaire was administered to 75 employees purposively selected from 15 NGOs, and 83 responses were received. Data were analysed using SPSS version 26 through descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and multiple regression.

Findings: All four drivers correlated positively and significantly with performance, with strategic innovation recording the strongest association ($r = 0.525$). The regression model was statistically

significant ($F = 9.912$, $p < 0.001$) and explained 33.7% of the variation in performance. Strategic direction ($B = 0.380$, $p = 0.023$) and strategic innovation ($B = 0.417$, $p = 0.040$) had significant effects, while strategic communication and organizational culture were not significant.

Conclusion: The study concludes that strategic direction and strategic innovation are the most dependable drivers of performance among NGOs in the livelihood sector in Samburu County. The study further concludes that strategic communication and organizational culture act as enablers that reinforce the effects of direction and innovation on performance.

Recommendations: The study recommends that NGO management should clarify strategic direction and review strategic objectives regularly to guide daily decisions. NGOs should sustain and formalise innovation practices, particularly partnership building and technology adoption. Management should treat strategic communication and organizational culture as enabling structures for strategy execution. NGOs should also diversify their donor base and strengthen local resource mobilisation to cushion operations against external funding shocks.

Keywords: *Strategic direction, strategic innovation, strategic communication, organizational culture, NGO performance*

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

NGOs have played an increasingly critical role in addressing humanitarian and development challenges since the 19th century, beginning with initiatives such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in 1864 and Save the Children in 1919. Globally, NGOs are recognized for their agility, people-centered approaches, and ability to complement government services (Cernea, 1988; Fowler, 1997). However, the sector continues to face criticism on issues of accountability, sustainability, and performance effectiveness (Hilhorst, 2003; Tvedt, 1998). In recent decades, challenges such as excessive bureaucracy in South Korea (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2022) and low funding in India (Van Zyl et al., 2019) have hindered the adoption of strategic management processes. Consequently, strategic management has become indispensable for NGOs seeking to sustain performance, adapt to dynamic environments, and maintain legitimacy.

Across Sub-Saharan Africa, NGOs are vital actors in humanitarian aid, livelihoods, and governance reforms. Yet their performance has often been undermined by weak strategic planning, corruption, and limited stakeholder engagement (Diamond & Khemani, 2011; Muleri, 2011). For

example, in South Sudan, lack of qualified staff and weak implementation capacity have hindered effective strategy execution (WFP, 2022). Similarly, in Somalia and Tanzania, NGOs face a disconnect between strategy design and monitoring systems, as well as insufficient participation of local stakeholders (Van Zyl et al., 2019). These challenges have contributed to donor fatigue, withdrawal of funding, and poor sustainability of interventions in the region.

In Kenya, NGOs are instrumental in supplementing government service delivery, particularly in marginalized areas. Nevertheless, their performance is constrained by unfavourable policies, political interference, and management-staff disconnects that weaken succession planning and strategic execution (Maina, 2021; Kariuki et al., 2023). The sector has also experienced redundancies, cost-cutting, and closure of operations, which underscores the need for innovative management strategies (Awuondo & Abdikadir, 2013). Samburu County, one of Kenya's poorest regions with 78% of its population living in poverty, has become a hotspot for NGO interventions, particularly in the livelihood sector. With over 84 NGOs operating in the county, there remains a pressing need for effective strategic management to optimize performance and ensure long-term impact.

Strategic management has been defined as the deliberate process of formulating, implementing, and evaluating actions that enable organizations to achieve long-term objectives in turbulent environments (Hamel & Prahalad, 2013; Iravo et al., 2013). It encompasses setting direction, leveraging innovation, fostering organizational culture, and enabling strategic communication. Strategic management drivers have been shown to foster resilience, efficiency, and competitive advantage by aligning resources with changing contexts (Chuang, 2015; Dansoh, 2005). Barnat (2013) further conceptualizes strategy as a blueprint that unifies an organization's major aims and programs into a coherent path toward sustainable performance. For NGOs, whose operations depend on accountability, legitimacy, and efficiency, strategic management drivers are critical levers for survival and impact. The persistent underperformance of NGOs in Samburu County, despite high levels of donor investment, highlights a contextual gap that this study seeks to address.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Annual NGO Sector Report of the NGOs Coordination Board (2022) indicates that 3,005 NGOs were operating in Kenya by June 30, 2023, with combined funding of KES 197.9 billion, an increase of KES 12.4 billion from the previous year. Over 80% of the funding originates from

outside the country, which exposes Kenyan NGOs to the priorities of foreign donors. Stafford et al. (2013) argue that no organization achieves its mission without firm control systems and consistent implementation of strategy. Cao et al. (2025) found that cultures founded on adaptability, collaboration and calculated risk taking enhance innovation and competitiveness, while Njenga et al. (2024) established that strategic communication explained 52.9% of the variation in performance among Kenyan state corporations.

In Samburu County, NGOs have experienced declining performance despite strategic management efforts. Donor numbers declined by 10% and donations by 7.5% between 2022 and 2023, while more than 30% of projects failed to deliver the intended outcomes to local communities (NGOs Coordination Board, 2022). The situation worsened in January 2025 when the United States government froze foreign assistance for a 90 day review, followed by deeper cuts approved by Congress in July 2025. By April 2025, at least 81 NGOs in Kenya had closed one or more offices. The funding shock affected essential programmes in health, water, food security and climate adaptation in a county that is arid, pastoralist and highly dependent on NGO interventions.

The withdrawal of funding resulted in the closure of health facilities, the suspension of community HIV outreach and the interruption of prevention programmes for adolescent girls in Samburu. Funding shortfalls further delayed the operationalisation of gazetted administrative units across Samburu, Turkana and Baringo, leaving residents without basic security and service infrastructure. NGOs in Samburu are therefore constrained by internal weaknesses in strategy, communication and stakeholder engagement, as well as by an external funding shock of unprecedented scale. Although performance can be measured at the individual, team or organizational level (Knies et al., 2016), the NGO sector has attracted limited research. The study therefore examines how strategic management drivers influence organizational performance among livelihood NGOs in Samburu County, Kenya.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

i. To determine the effect of strategic direction on the performance of NGOs in the Livelihood Sector in Samburu County, Kenya.

ii. To determine the effect of strategic innovation on the performance of NGOs in the Livelihood Sector in Samburu County, Kenya.

iii. To determine the effect of strategic communication on the performance of NGOs in the Livelihood Sector in Samburu County, Kenya

iv. To determine the effect of organization culture on the performance of NGOs in the Livelihood Sector in Samburu County, Kenya

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, the research made an evaluation of the theoretical and empirical literature relevant to the research problem.

Theoretical Framework.

A theory provides a structured explanation of relationships between concepts and variables, helping to predict, interpret, and understand phenomena within a given field.

Strategic Contingency Theory

Strategic Contingency Theory (SCT) emphasizes that there is no single universal approach to managing organizations, highlighting that effectiveness depends on how well internal strategies align with external environmental conditions (Donaldson, 2001). In guiding strategic direction, SCT suggests that decisions regarding growth, diversification, partnerships, or operational focus should be contingent upon the organization's environment, resource availability, and stakeholder expectations. When key strategic drivers such as leadership style, resource allocation, and technological adoption are tailored to fit prevailing contextual factors, organizations are more likely to enhance performance. Conversely, misalignment between strategies and environmental demands may result in inefficiencies and reduced competitiveness. This perspective is particularly relevant for non-profit and livelihood sector organizations, where responsiveness to donor priorities, community needs, and institutional capacities is essential for sustaining effectiveness. However, the theory is criticized for lacking prescriptive guidance, assuming accurate environmental assessment, and under emphasizing internal factors like culture and leadership (Child, 1997). Nevertheless, SCT remains a valuable conceptual framework, especially when integrated with complementary theories addressing internal organizational processes, offering a holistic approach to improving performance in complex operational environments.

Resource-Based View (RBV)

The Resource-Based View (RBV) posits that a firm's internal resources and capabilities,

particularly those that are Valuable, Rare, Inimitable, and Non-Substitutable (VRIN), are central to achieving sustained competitive advantage and superior performance (Barney, 1986, 1991; Hamel & Prahalad, 1996; Amit & Schoemaker, 1993). These strategic resources, including unique assets, knowledge, organizational culture, and proprietary technologies, require significant time and effort to develop, making them difficult for competitors to replicate. RBV adopts an inside-out perspective, emphasizing internal strengths over external market forces, and highlights resource heterogeneity and immobility as key conditions for long-term advantage. The theory also underscores the role of internal capabilities in guiding strategic decisions such as innovation, product development, and geographical expansion. However, RBV faces critiques for its limited guidance on how firms can operationally develop and leverage VRIN resources (Priem & Butler, 2001). Scholars also note that RBV's emphasis on pursuing second-order capabilities—structures that enable superior innovation can lead firms into an endless search for higher-order advantages without clear managerial direction (Collis, 1994; Priem & Butler, 2001). Nevertheless, RBV remains a foundational framework in strategic management, requiring careful interpretation and complementary practical approaches to resource development and strategic implementation.

Strategic Communication Management (SCM)

Strategic Communication Management (SCM) theory emphasizes the planned, purposeful, and systematic use of communication to align organizational goals with stakeholder needs, fostering transparency, engagement, and strategic alignment (Macnamara, 2012; Cornelissen, 2008; Grunig & Grunig, 1992; Verčič et al., 2012). The theory is particularly relevant for nonprofit organizations, where activities such as volunteer reliance, serving vulnerable clients, fundraising, and partnerships shape communication practices and risk profiles (Herman & Oliver, 2001; Herman et al., 2004; Liu, 2012; Wiggill, 2011). SCM provides a framework for leveraging communication as a strategic tool to improve performance, strengthen stakeholder trust and loyalty, enhance reputation, and support resource mobilization. Despite its practical significance, SCM has been critiqued for emphasizing one-way communication models that lack feedback mechanisms and for prioritizing practical applications over theoretical development (Pande, 2020; Bütschi & Steyn, 2006). Scholars argue that balancing theory and practice is essential to refine communication strategies, inform empirical research, and enhance both academic rigor and practical utility in organizational management.

Organizational Culture Theory

The study also draws on organizational culture theory, which examines how shared values, beliefs, and practices influence employee behavior and overall organizational effectiveness. Organizational culture has roots in both anthropology and sociology, with anthropology viewing culture as a metaphor for organizations and sociology taking a functionalist perspective, defining culture as something an organization possesses (Schein, 1988). Schein's widely applied framework defines culture as a pattern of basic assumptions developed by a group to address internal integration and external adaptation, emphasizing the importance of teaching these cultural norms to new members to maintain organizational unity. The theory has been instrumental in understanding how culture shapes organizational practices and effectiveness. However, Organizational Culture Theory has faced critiques regarding its comprehensiveness and practical applicability. Scholars argue that culture lacks consistency, as organizational stories may not carry shared meaning, and large organizations often contain multiple sub-cultures that may conflict (Parker, 2000). Additionally, textbook classifications tend to oversimplify cultural dynamics and overlook the economic and structural contradictions inherent in complex organizations, highlighting the need for careful interpretation when applying the theory.

Conceptual framework

A conceptual framework is a visual representation of the relationship between study variables. Conceptual frameworks are the basis of any research and need to be articulated to bring an easy and visual understanding of the variables under consideration (Ravitch & Riggan, 2012). Below is an illustration of the adopted conceptual framework. As indicated, the independent variables used are strategic direction, strategic innovation, strategic communication, and organizational culture. The dependent variable is the organization's performance of NGOs.

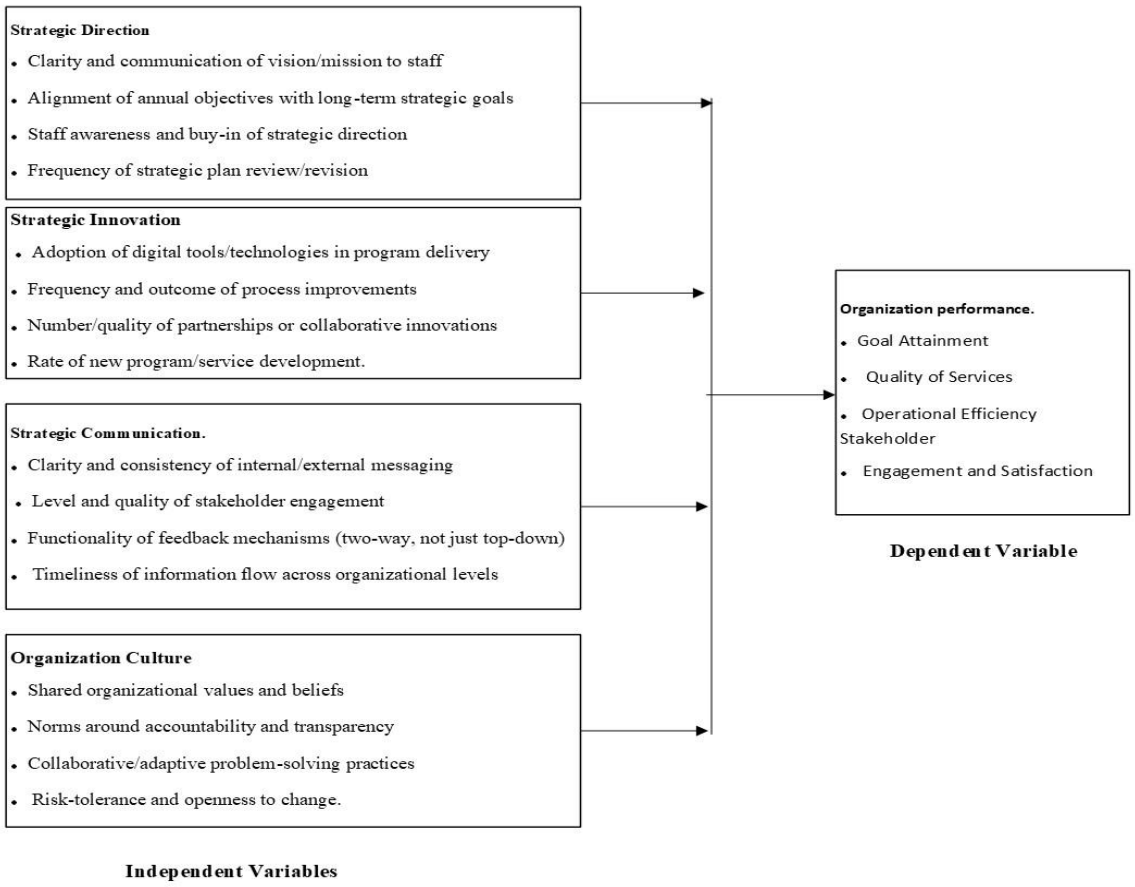

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Empirical Review

Strategic direction plays an important role in enhancing the performance of NGOs. Ahmed (2013) examined NGOs providing education, healthcare and disaster relief services using a descriptive design with 75 organizational leaders, and found that internal management challenges, including strategic planning and leadership, significantly affect organizational outcomes. Hrebiniak (2013), drawing on case studies of 15 NGOs and in-depth interviews, established that the logical flow between strategic components enhances NGO performance. Brenes et al. (2008) in Latin America and Hill et al. (2007) in the United Kingdom demonstrated that structures and control systems aligned with chosen strategies positively influence performance. Bryson (2011) further underscored the importance of long term vision and strategic planning in supporting mission clarity and organizational effectiveness.

Strategic innovation is important in enhancing organizational performance. Amabile et al. (1996)

found that work environments offering freedom, encouragement and opportunities for experimentation enhance creativity and innovative behaviour. Woodman et al. (1993) showed that the coordination of creative resources across individuals, groups and departments fosters organizational innovation. Sackmann (2006) demonstrated that entrepreneurial cultures drive opportunity recognition, adaptation and strategic renewal. Judge and Allan (2007) further revealed that structured innovation processes strengthen organizational capabilities and competitiveness. The studies collectively indicate that an innovative culture, the integration of resources and experimentation enable NGOs to adapt and sustain performance in dynamic contexts (Chen, 2007; Mumford & Licuanan, 2004). Innovation remains a central driver of NGO responsiveness to changing donor and community needs.

Omofowa (2021), using a quantitative design with 291 participants from microfinance banks in Nigeria, found that strategic communication positively influenced business performance more than reward systems. Musheke and Phiri (2021) examined 160 employees in the service industry in Lilongwe, Malawi, and established that effective communication contributes to successful strategy implementation and improved performance. In Kenya, Chepkosgei and Mwangi (2020) assessed financial and commercial state corporations using a descriptive design with 145 respondents and concluded that strategic communication significantly influences organizational performance. Otwako (2024) further confirmed the role of strategic communication in enhancing the performance of national NGOs in Juba, South Sudan. The studies collectively demonstrate that strategic communication is a key driver of organizational success across diverse African contexts.

Organizational culture significantly influences performance across contexts. Armstrong and Baron (2006) and Daft (2010) define culture as the shared values and norms that guide decisions and operations, while Malhotra (2011) notes that culture shapes both internal and external interactions. Sun (2008) found that strong and well communicated cultures enhance employee commitment and efficiency, while Denison and Mishra (1995) reported that adaptive and participative cultures are associated with improved organizational effectiveness. Allaire and Firsirotu (1984) emphasise culture as a framework for decision making, while Brown (1995) highlights it as a source of competitive advantage. The findings confirm that organizational culture is vital for aligning strategies, maximizing employee potential and strengthening NGO performance, although its enforcement differs across organizations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive research design to examine how strategic management drivers influence organizational performance among livelihood NGOs in Samburu County, Kenya, since the design permits systematic measurement and interpretation of variables in their natural context (Aggarwal, 2019; Mugenda, 2015). The target population comprised the 15 NGOs of the Samburu Food Security and Livelihood Technical Working Group, from which purposive sampling yielded 75 staff from the Country Director's Office, Institutional Support Units, project management, MEAL teams and field liaison functions (Kothari & Garg, 2014). Data were collected through a structured five point Likert scale questionnaire covering strategic direction, strategic innovation, strategic communication, organizational culture and organizational performance, administered electronically through Kobo Toolbox after approvals and informed consent.

A pilot test was conducted to refine the questionnaire before the main data collection. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha with a minimum threshold of 0.7 (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011), while construct validity was assessed through item total correlations and factor analysis with loadings of 0.4 and above considered acceptable (Hair et al., 2019). Content and face validity were improved through supervisor review and revision of ambiguous items. The data were edited, coded and analysed using SPSS version 26, applying frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations. Pearson correlation tested associations between variables, while multiple regression tested the influence of the strategic management drivers on organizational performance (Saunders et al., 2019; Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The section presents the results data analysis, results interpretation, presentation and discussion of the findings based on the general and specific objectives of the study. The section covers response rate, pilot test results, demographic information and descriptive statistics. The section also encompasses inferential statistics which included correlation analysis and regression analysis.

Response Rate

The study targeted 75 employees purposively drawn from 15 livelihood-focused NGOs operating in Samburu County. The selected sample was issued with questionnaires out of which a total of 83

questionnaires were received, representing a 110% response rate. This over-achievement of the target sample size strengthened the reliability and representativeness of the findings, as a larger-than-anticipated number of respondents reduces sampling error and increases confidence that the data collected reflects the true views of the target population. It also suggests strong engagement and willingness among respondents to participate, minimizing the risk of non-response bias that could have compromised the validity of the study's conclusions. Lawoko (2019) posits that a response rate of 50% is sufficient for analysis and reporting, while a response rate of 60% is good. A response rate of 70% and above, according to the researchers, is excellent. The response rate for this study was therefore satisfactory to make inference and conclusions.

Pilot Test Results

A pilot test was conducted to assess the validity and reliability of the questionnaire before the main data collection. Cooper and Schindler (2016) note that a pilot test detects weaknesses in design and instrumentation, while Leedy and Ormrod (2019) regard a pilot study as an effective way of determining the feasibility of a study. A total of 10% of the sample size participated in the pilot study, and the participants were excluded from the final study to avoid survey fatigue. Reliability, defined as the degree to which research instruments yield consistent results (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003), was assessed using Cronbach's alpha with a threshold of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2019). The coefficient was computed for all the study variables.

The findings indicated that strategic direction had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.808, strategic innovation 0.819, strategic communication 0.827, organizational culture 0.846 and organizational performance 0.857, showing that the questionnaire met the reliability criterion of 0.7. Validity refers to the degree to which an instrument measures the trait it is intended to measure (Saunders et al., 2019). Face validity was enhanced by developing the questionnaire items in line with the study objectives and conceptual framework, while content validity was enhanced through review by lecturers and supervisors, who identified ambiguous items. Construct validity was tested through factor analysis, with loadings of 0.50 and above adopted as the threshold (Garrett, 2019). The average factor loading was computed for each construct.

The results showed that strategic direction had an average factor loading of 0.564, strategic innovation 0.502, strategic communication 0.525, organizational culture 0.515 and organizational performance 0.538. All the constructs therefore recorded average loadings above the threshold of

0.50 adopted by the study, and all items under each variable were accepted. The findings imply that the items grouped under each construct shared sufficient common variance and measured the intended dimensions of strategic management drivers and organizational performance. Exploratory factor analysis is used to establish the number of factors influencing variables and to identify the variables that group together (Garrett, 2019). The results confirmed that all the constructs were suitable for further analysis in the study.

Demographic Information.

The demographic characteristics of the respondents were examined in terms of gender, department or unit of attachment and years of professional experience, in order to establish the diversity, organisational roles and professional backgrounds of the respondents. Creswell and Creswell (2018) note that understanding the demographic characteristics of respondents provides an important context for interpreting research findings. Of the 83 respondents, 43 (52%) were female and 40 (48%) were male, reflecting a relatively balanced representation of both genders. The distribution suggests that the study captured diverse perspectives from men and women working in livelihood sector NGOs in Samburu County. Gender was therefore treated as a descriptive characteristic of the sample rather than as a variable for measuring organisational performance.

Project Managers formed the largest proportion of respondents at 22%, followed by Field Officers at 21% and MEAL staff at 16%, while Project Officers, Volunteers, Administration and Finance Managers, Heads of Programmes and other technical staff broadened the perspectives. The distribution indicates that the study drew on staff involved in strategic planning, programme implementation and performance oversight, consistent with Hrebiniak (2013), who emphasised aligning strategic decisions with implementation. In terms of experience, 35% of respondents had served for 4 to 6 years, 31% for more than 10 years and 28% for 7 to 10 years. A total of 94% had at least four years of experience, suggesting that the findings were informed by institutional knowledge and direct exposure to strategic management practices.

Descriptive Statistics

Respondents rated their agreement with statements on strategic direction, strategic innovation, strategic communication, organisational culture and organisational performance on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Results are presented below, ordered from the highest to the lowest mean score.

Strategic Direction

The findings from the first specific objective indicate that respondents generally held a strong positive perception of strategic direction within their organisations, with an aggregate mean of 4.555. The highest-rated statements related to the role of organisational vision in guiding strategic decisions and actions (M = 4.646, SD = 0.530) and the contribution of well-defined organisational goals to improved performance (M = 4.634, SD = 0.485). These findings suggest that clear organisational vision and goals provide an important foundation for decision-making, resource allocation and programme implementation. The results are consistent with Ahmed (2013), who established that strategic planning and leadership significantly influence organisational outcomes among non-profit organisations. Similarly, Hrebiniak (2013) emphasised that the alignment of strategic decisions and their effective execution are essential for organisational performance. Brenes et al. (2008) and Hill et al. (2007) also demonstrated that aligning organisational structures and control systems with selected strategies contributes positively to performance. The relatively high rating for regular review of specific objectives (M = 4.500, SD = 0.503) further reflects the importance of maintaining relevant and responsive strategic priorities. However, the comparatively lower rating for alignment of organisational mission with community needs (M = 4.439, SD = 0.547) suggests that NGOs could strengthen the connection between their stated missions and the changing priorities of the communities they serve. Overall, the findings reinforce the empirical evidence presented in the literature review that a clearly articulated and consistently implemented strategic direction is an important contributor to organisational effectiveness.

Table 1: Strategic Direction

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
The organization's vision clearly guides its strategic decisions and actions.	4.646	0.530
Organizational goals are well-defined and contribute to improved performance outcomes.	4.634	0.485
Specific objectives are regularly reviewed and adjusted to enhance program effectiveness.	4.500	0.503
The organization's mission effectively aligns with the needs of the communities it serves.	4.439	0.547
Aggregate	**4.555**	**0.516**

Strategic Innovation

The findings indicate that strategic innovation was highly regarded among participating NGOs, with an aggregate mean of 4.607. New partnerships and collaborative approaches received the highest rating (M = 4.841, SD = 0.367), followed by creative approaches to improving operational efficiency and service delivery (M = 4.622, SD = 0.513). These results highlight the importance of collaboration and creative problem-solving in strengthening programme impact. They align with Amabile et al. (1996), who emphasised experimentation in promoting employee innovation, and Woodman et al. (1993), who linked cross-departmental coordination of creative resources to innovation. Sackmann (2003, 2006) similarly demonstrated that aligning internal resources with external opportunities supports strategic renewal and organisational adaptation. Technology integration also recorded a high rating (M = 4.512, SD = 0.527), reflecting its contribution to programme effectiveness and data management. However, introducing innovative programmes to address emerging community needs received a comparatively lower rating (M = 4.451, SD = 0.548), suggesting scope for strengthening needs identification and developing responsive programme approaches. Overall, the findings reinforce the empirical literature on experimentation, resource integration and organisational adaptability as drivers of strategic innovation and improved organisational performance.

Table 2: Strategic Innovation

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
The organization develops new partnerships or collaborative approaches to expand its impact.	4.841	0.367
The organization applies creative approaches to improve operational efficiency and service delivery.	4.622	0.513
The organization integrates technology to enhance program effectiveness and data management.	4.512	0.527
The organization regularly introduces innovative programs to address emerging community needs.	4.451	0.548
Aggregate	**4.607**	**0.489**

Strategic Communication

The findings indicate that strategic communication was highly regarded across the sampled NGOs, with an aggregate mean of 4.518. Consistent messaging across programmes and stakeholder

communications recorded the highest rating (M = 4.537, SD = 0.526), while internal communication, stakeholder participation in decision-making and programme planning, and clear communication of organisational strategies each recorded a mean of 4.512. These results highlight the importance of information-sharing, stakeholder engagement and internal coordination in effective programme implementation. The findings align with Omofowa (2021), Musheke and Phiri (2021), and Chepkosgei and Mwangi (2020), who established positive relationships between strategic communication and organisational performance. Similarly, Otwako (2024) emphasised its role in enhancing the performance of national NGOs in South Sudan. Overall, the findings reinforce the importance of communication in promoting transparency, facilitating feedback, strengthening stakeholder relationships and aligning organisational priorities. However, sustained attention to timely feedback and meaningful stakeholder participation remains essential for improving organisational effectiveness.

Table 3: Strategic Communication

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
The organization maintains consistent messaging across all programs and communications with stakeholders.	4.537	0.526
Internal communication channels are effective in providing timely information and feedback to staff and stakeholders.	4.512	0.550
The organization actively engages stakeholders in decision-making and program planning processes.	4.512	0.503
The organization communicates its strategies, goals, and decisions clearly to all staff.	4.512	0.503
Aggregate	**4.518**	**0.5205**

Organizational Culture

The findings reveal that organisational culture was highly rated among the participating NGOs, recording an aggregate mean of 4.649, the highest among the four strategic management drivers. Employee participation in setting clear and achievable goals received the highest mean score (M = 4.854, SD = 0.356), followed by the positive influence of shared organisational beliefs on employee behaviour and commitment (M = 4.695, SD = 0.463). These results suggest that participative practices and shared values are important features of the organisational environments within the sampled NGOs. The findings are consistent with Sun (2008), whose study of NGOs in

East Africa established that strong and well-communicated organisational cultures enhance employee commitment and efficiency. Similarly, Denison and Mishra (1995) found that adaptive and participative organisational cultures improve programme effectiveness. These studies support the present finding that involving employees in organisational goal-setting and promoting shared beliefs can strengthen commitment, collaboration and collective responsibility. The rating for organisational core values guiding daily operations and decision-making (M = 4.549, SD = 0.501) further indicates that organisational values provide a framework for employee conduct and the execution of activities. However, the comparatively lower rating for employee collaboration and sharing of ideas to address challenges (M = 4.500, SD = 0.503) suggests that NGOs could further strengthen opportunities for teamwork, cross-functional learning and collective problem-solving. Overall, the findings affirm the empirical evidence in the literature review that a participative, adaptive and values-driven organisational culture creates a supportive environment for effective programme implementation and improved organisational performance.

Table 4: Organizational Culture

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
The organization encourages employees to participate in setting clear and achievable goals.	4.854	0.356
Shared beliefs within the organization positively influence employee behavior and commitment.	4.695	0.463
The organization's core values guide daily operations and decision-making.	4.549	0.501
Employees are encouraged to collaborate and share ideas to address challenges.	4.500	0.503
Aggregate	**4.649**	**0.458**

Organizational Performance

The findings indicate that organisational performance was generally rated positively, with an aggregate mean of 4.466. The highest-rated aspect was the consistent achievement of specific objectives set for livelihood programmes (M = 4.537, SD = 0.526), followed by the organisation's ability to reach its targeted number of beneficiaries (M = 4.476, SD = 0.689). These findings suggest that the participating NGOs demonstrate positive performance in relation to programme objective attainment and beneficiary reach. However, stakeholder engagement and satisfaction

recorded a slightly lower mean of 4.463 (SD = 0.652), while meeting beneficiary needs and expectations and effective resource utilisation each recorded a mean of 4.427. This indicates that, although performance was generally perceived positively, there remains scope to strengthen service responsiveness, stakeholder satisfaction and the efficient use of available resources. The findings are consistent with Epstein and McFarlan (2011), who emphasised sustainability, service quality and stakeholder engagement as important indicators of NGO performance. Similarly, Amaratunga (2011) established that performance measurement strengthens programme impact, service quality and employee satisfaction by linking organisational resources to intended goals. In the Kenyan context, Imathiu (2016) found that stakeholder participation, accountability and resource mobilisation significantly improve programme impact, service quality and stakeholder satisfaction. The present findings therefore reinforce the importance of assessing NGO performance beyond the achievement of programme targets to include service quality, resource utilisation and the satisfaction of beneficiaries and other stakeholders. The comparatively lower aggregate mean for organisational performance, relative to the four strategic management drivers, also suggests that positive internal management practices do not automatically translate into equally high performance outcomes. This may partly reflect the resource constraints, funding pressures and operational challenges affecting NGOs operating in the livelihood sector.

Table 5: Organizational Performance

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
The organization consistently achieves the specific objectives set for its livelihood programs.	4.537	0.526
The organization reaches the number of beneficiaries it targets for each livelihood project.	4.476	0.689
The organization actively engages stakeholders and maintains high levels of satisfaction among partners, donors, and beneficiaries.	4.463	0.652
The services provided by the organization meet the needs and expectations of beneficiaries.	4.427	0.685
The organization effectively utilizes its resources to achieve program goals and minimize waste.	4.427	0.567
Aggregate	**4.466**	**0.638**

Inferential Statistics

Inferential statistics were employed to examine the relationships between the independent variables strategic direction, strategic innovation, strategic communication and organisational culture and organisational performance among NGOs in the livelihood sector in Samburu County, while also assessing performance differences across respondents' demographic and professional characteristics. Consistent with the methodology outlined in the research methodology, Pearson correlation analysis, multiple regression analysis, and group-comparison tests using the independent samples t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were applied. Pearson correlation established the direction, strength and statistical significance of relationships between the study variables, while multiple regression assessed the individual and combined contributions of the four strategic management drivers to organisational performance, controlling for other variables in the model. The t-test and ANOVA examined whether performance differences across respondent groups were statistically significant. As Creswell and Creswell (2018) explain, inferential statistics enable researchers to move beyond describing observed data to examine relationships and differences. These techniques therefore provided a basis for testing the study hypotheses and drawing evidence-based conclusions regarding the relationship between strategic management practices and organisational performance. The results are presented in the subsequent sections.

Correlation Analysis

Table 6 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients between organisational performance and each independent variable, as well as the relationships among the independent variables themselves.

Table 6: Correlation Coefficients

	Org. Performance	Strategic Direction	Strategic Innovation	Strategic Communication	Org. Culture
Organizational Performance	1.000				
Strategic Direction	0.499**	1.000			
Strategic Innovation	0.525**	0.632**	1.000		
Strategic Communication	0.346**	0.272*	0.501**	1.000	
Organizational Culture	0.383**	0.403**	0.558**	0.621**	1.000

* * Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). n = 83.

The correlation analysis revealed moderate, positive and significant relationships between the four strategic management drivers and organisational performance among livelihood NGOs. Strategic innovation recorded the strongest association ($r = 0.525$, $p < 0.001$), followed by strategic direction ($r = 0.499$, $p < 0.001$), organisational culture ($r = 0.383$, $p < 0.001$) and strategic communication ($r = 0.346$, $p = 0.002$). The findings align with Hrebiniak (2013), Sun (2008) and Chepkosgei and Mwangi (2020), who emphasised strategic alignment, shared values and effective communication. Strategic direction correlated with strategic innovation ($r = 0.632$, $p < 0.001$), and strategic communication with organisational culture ($r = 0.621$, $p < 0.001$). The correlations justified multiple regression analysis to establish the unique contribution of each driver.

Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was used to assess the combined and individual effect of strategic direction, strategic innovation, strategic communication and organisational culture on organisational performance.

Table 7: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.580	0.337	0.303	0.355

The model summary shows an R Square of 0.337 and an Adjusted R Square of 0.302, indicating that strategic direction, strategic innovation, strategic communication and organisational culture jointly explain 33.7% of the variation in organisational performance among the sampled NGOs in Samburu County, reducing to 30.2% after adjustment for the predictors. The finding aligns with Hrebiniak (2013), Sackmann (2006), Chepkosgei and Mwangi (2020) and Denison and Mishra (1995), who linked strategic alignment, innovation, communication and culture to performance. The remaining 66.3% of the variation is attributable to other factors, such as stakeholder participation, accountability and resource mobilisation (Imathiu, 2016), as well as performance measurement (Amaratunga, 2011), reinforcing the multidimensional nature of organisational performance.

Table 8: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	4.935	4.0	1.232	9.912	0.000
Residual	9.709	78	0.126		
Total	14.644	82			

The ANOVA results confirmed that the overall regression model was statistically significant and

provided a good fit for the data ($F(4, 77) = 9.912$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that strategic direction, strategic innovation, strategic communication and organisational culture, when considered jointly, significantly explain variations in organisational performance among the sampled NGOs. This finding is consistent with the empirical studies in the literature review. For instance, Ahmed (2013) established that strategic planning and leadership significantly influence organisational outcomes, while Hrebiniak (2013) highlighted the importance of aligning strategic decisions and organisational processes to enhance performance. Similarly, Omofowa (2021) and Chepkosgei and Mwangi (2020) demonstrated the contribution of effective strategic communication to organisational performance, while Sun (2008) and Denison and Mishra (1995) emphasised the role of organisational culture in strengthening employee commitment and programme effectiveness. Collectively, these studies reinforce the importance of integrating different strategic management practices in improving organisational performance. The significant F-statistic therefore supports the overall relevance of the four strategic management drivers in explaining performance, although their individual contributions differ, as examined in the subsequent regression coefficients analysis.

Table 9: Regression Coefficients

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	-0.342	0.829		-0.412	0.681
Strategic Direction	0.380	0.164	0.281	2.321	0.023
Strategic Innovation	0.417	0.217	0.264	1.927	0.040
Strategic Communication	0.153	0.188	0.100	0.811	0.420
Organizational Culture	0.100	0.212	0.061	0.472	0.638

Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance.

The resulting regression model is:

$$\mathbf{Y = -0.342 + 0.380X_1 + 0.417X_2 + 0.153X_3 + 0.100X_4}$$

Where Y = Organisational Performance, X_1 = Strategic Direction, X_2 = Strategic Innovation, X_3 = Strategic Communication and X_4 = Organisational Culture.

Strategic direction had a positive and statistically significant effect on organisational performance ($\beta = 0.380$, $p = 0.023$), meaning that, holding the other three drivers constant, NGOs with clearer

strategic direction reported meaningfully better performance. This supports Bryson (2018) and Hitt et al. (2017), who similarly found that a clearly articulated vision and well-defined goals translate into stronger organisational outcomes. Strategic innovation had coefficient of $\beta = 0.417$ and a p-value of 0.040, and the relationship was considered significant since the p value 0.040 was less than the significant level of 0.05. Given that strategic innovation also had the strongest simple correlation with performance ($r = 0.525$), this suggests its effect is real but partly absorbed by its overlap with strategic direction ($r = 0.632$ between the two).

Strategic communication ($\beta = 0.153$, $p = 0.420$) and organisational culture ($\beta = 0.100$, $p = 0.638$) were not statistically significant independent predictors of performance once strategic direction and innovation were accounted for. This does not mean communication and culture are unimportant both correlated positively and significantly with performance on their own (Table 6) but it indicates that their influence on performance runs substantially through, or alongside, the effects of clear direction and active innovation rather than operating as a separate, independent force, consistent with Njenga et al. (2024) and Cameron and Quinn (2011).

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that strategic direction plays an important role in enhancing organisational performance among NGOs operating in the livelihood sector in Samburu County. A clearly articulated organisational vision, well-defined goals, and regularly reviewed objectives provide a sense of direction and guide decision-making, resource allocation, and programme implementation. The findings suggest that organisations with a clear strategic direction are better positioned to align their activities with their intended objectives and achieve improved performance. The study further concludes that strategic innovation is an important contributor to organisational performance. The findings highlight the value of developing new partnerships, embracing creative approaches, and exploring innovative ways of improving operational efficiency and service delivery. Although innovation may not operate independently of other strategic management practices, it reinforces organisational direction and provides opportunities for NGOs to adapt to changing operating environments, respond to emerging needs, and enhance their overall impact.

Additionally, the study concludes that strategic communication and organisational culture play complementary roles in supporting organisational performance. Effective communication

promotes information sharing, coordination, stakeholder engagement, and feedback, while a positive organisational culture encourages staff participation, teamwork, shared values, and collective responsibility. These practices create an enabling organisational environment in which strategic decisions can be effectively communicated, understood, and translated into action. Their contribution is therefore closely linked to how well they reinforce other strategic management practices within the organisation. Overall, the study establishes that strategic direction, strategic innovation, strategic communication, and organisational culture collectively contribute to organisational performance among NGOs in the livelihood sector in Samburu County. However, organisational performance is not determined by internal strategic management practices alone. Other organisational and external factors, including departmental differences, employees' levels of experience, resource availability, donor funding, and the broader operating environment, may also influence performance. This highlights the need for NGOs to adopt an integrated approach to strategic management that combines clear organisational direction, continuous innovation, effective communication, and a supportive organisational culture while remaining responsive to the wider context in which they operate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that the management of livelihood NGOs in Samburu County should continue to invest in clarifying and communicating strategic direction ensuring vision and mission statements are actively used to guide day-to-day decisions, and that strategic objectives are reviewed on a regular, scheduled basis. Given how strongly this predicted performance, it is the most direct and cost-effective lever available to NGO leadership. The study further recommends that NGOs sustain and formalise their innovation practices, particularly around partnership-building and technology adoption, since these were rated highly by staff and carried the strongest overall relationship with performance.

In addition, the study recommends that NGOs treat strategic communication and organisational culture as enabling infrastructure rather than an afterthought pairing every strategic decision with a clear internal communication plan, and deliberately reinforcing the participative, values-based culture that respondents already rated highly. Given the significantly lower and more variable performance ratings from MEAL staff, the study recommends that NGO leadership engage MEAL teams directly and regularly on performance data, both to correct any genuine underperformance

MEAL is uniquely positioned to see, and to ensure MEAL's more critical view is fed back into strategic decision-making rather than sitting unaddressed.

Given the significantly lower performance ratings among staff with 4-6 years of tenure compared with more tenured staff, the study recommends that NGOs review how this group is supported -- for example through targeted career development, workload review, or structured check-ins -- since this tenure band may be at a point where initial optimism has faded but the deeper organisational buy-in seen in longer-serving staff has not yet developed. Finally, given the funding volatility described in the background of the study, the study recommends that NGOs in Samburu County diversify their donor base and strengthen local resource mobilisation, so that internal strategic management gains are not undermined by external funding shocks outside management's control.

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