Change Management Strategies and Performance of Non-Governmental Organizations in Kisumu County

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Change Management Strategies and Performance of Non-Governmental Organizations in Kisumu County

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of this study was to assess the influence of change management strategies and performance of NGOs.

Methodology: The study adopted the descriptive research design. The target population of the study were senior managers from the existing NGOs Kisumu with a sample size of 64 respondents which is 10% of the target population. The data collection instrument used was a structured questionnaire. The study mainly used primary data. Primary data was collected using self-administered questionnaires. A pilot study was done to test the validity and reliability of the data collected instruments. The study adopted a multiple regression analysis to the test the significance levels of one variable over another. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used. Data obtained were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Findings: The results showed that communication clarity (β = 0.263, t = 3.229, p = 0.002), leadership strategy (β = 0.215, t = 2.955, p = 0.004) and organizational culture (β = 0.517, t = 4.998, p = 0.001) were all positive and significant in explaining performance of NGOs in Kenya. While Alignment of Change (β = 0.125, t = 1.080, p = 0.282) had a positive but insignificant relation with performance.

Unique Contribution to Theory Practice and Policy: The study recommends that organizations should prioritize its communications with employees, align their visions with the needs of their stakeholders, build leaders who can guide and control the change processes and to create cultures that support change management initiatives.

Keywords: *Change Strategies, Organizational Performance, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Organizational Culture*

INTRODUCTION

In today's dynamic and competitive environment, organizations across the globe are compelled to adopt strategic change management practices to remain relevant and effective. Change management, as a discipline, encompasses the theories, processes, and tools that guide organizations through transformation, whether incremental or radical (Mizrak, 2023). Globally, scholars have linked successful change management to organizational excellence, sustainability, and competitive advantage (Goetsch & Davis, 2014). Theoretical models such as Kurt Lewin's Three-Step Change Model and Kanter's Theory of Change emphasize the importance of motivation, leadership, and cultural alignment in driving change. Strategic change implementation, though complex, is essential for translating vision into action, and must be supported by flexible planning, resource mobilization, and stakeholder engagement (Kiguta et al., 2023).

Regionally, decentralization has emerged as a key reform strategy, with countries like Kenya adopting devolved governance structures to enhance service delivery and citizen participation (Cheema & Rondinelli, 2007). The Kenyan Constitution of 2010 marked a significant shift, establishing county governments tasked with implementing development plans aligned with Vision 2030. However, despite these structural reforms, many counties continue to face challenges such as limited resources, weak leadership, and fragmented change processes (Ngigi & Busolo, 2019). Empirical studies within Kenya reveal that organizational design, communication, leadership, and culture significantly influence the success of change initiatives. For instance, Kakucha et al. (2018) found a strong link between organizational structure and change management in Mombasa County, while Nafula (2005) emphasized the role of timely communication in restoring profitability in sugar belt firms.

Despite growing literature on change management, a critical research gap persists in understanding how strategic change management practices specifically affect the performance of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in devolved Kenyan contexts such as Kisumu County. NGOs operate under unique constraints such as limited funding, diverse stakeholder expectations, and evolving policy environments, yet they play a pivotal role in service delivery and social transformation. Existing studies have largely focused on public sector institutions and corporate entities, leaving NGO dynamics underexplored. This study therefore sought to bridge that gap by examining the relationship between change management strategies and organizational performance among NGOs in Kisumu County, offering insights that are both contextually grounded and practically relevant.

Problem Statement

Effective change management is expected to guide organizations through transitions by fostering innovation, aligning stakeholder efforts, and overcoming resistance to transformation. In the context of NGOs, this expectation is even more critical due to their complex stakeholder environments, regulatory demands, and resource limitations (Cordery et al., 2023). Strategic change management offers a pathway for NGOs to enhance performance, adapt to evolving challenges, and achieve long-term sustainability. It is anticipated that through clear visioning, stakeholder engagement, and structured implementation, NGOs can not only survive but thrive in Kenya's dynamic development landscape (Engida et al., 2022; Kok & Siripipatthanakul, 2023).

However, many NGOs in Kenya continue to perform below expectations, with persistent challenges in project delivery, financial sustainability, and strategic alignment. Studies have shown that performance measurement in NGOs is difficult due to their non-quantifiable goals (Abu-Serdaneh et al., 2022), while others have focused on risk management, partnerships, and core competencies (Kamunya & Chege, 2021; Mukami & Muturi, 2018; Mailu & Kariuki, 2022). Despite the strategic importance of change management, most research has concentrated on donor funding, financial controls, and project evaluation, leaving a gap in understanding how change management strategies influence NGO performance. This study therefore sought to fill that gap by examining the role of change management strategies in shaping the performance of NGOs in Kisumu County, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on three foundational theories that provide insight into the dynamics of organizational change and performance. The first was Kurt Lewin's Three-Step Change Model (Lewin, 1947), which conceptualizes change as a process involving three stages: unfreezing, changing, and refreezing. Unfreezing involves preparing the organization to accept that change is necessary, changing refers to the transition phase where new behaviors and processes are introduced, and refreezing solidifies the new state as the standard practice. This model emphasized the importance of motivation and readiness for change, making it particularly relevant for NGOs that must continuously adapt to shifting stakeholder expectations and resource environments. In this study, Lewin's model informed the sequencing of change management strategies and highlights the need for structured transition planning within NGOs.

The second theory was the Denison Organizational Culture Model that developed by Denison and Mishra (1995). It links organizational culture to performance through four key traits: involvement,

consistency, adaptability, and mission. These traits are believed to influence an organization's ability to respond to change, align internal processes, and maintain strategic direction. The model suggested that a strong, coherent culture enhances organizational effectiveness, especially during periods of transformation. For NGOs in Kisumu County, this theory provided a lens to examine how cultural practices such as shared values, leadership behaviors, and internal communication affected the implementation and success of change initiatives. It also supported the inclusion of organizational culture as a variable in the conceptual framework.

The third theory was Kanter's Theory of Change Management which was proposed by Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1983). This theory posits that successful change is driven by leadership, vision, and the empowerment of employees. Kanter emphasized that change is not just a technical process but a social one, requiring engagement, trust-building, and alignment of individual and organizational goals. Her theory underscored the role of senior management in shaping attitudes and behaviors that support change. In this study, Kanter's theory informed the leadership strategy dimension, guiding the analysis of how managerial actions and strategic direction influence NGO performance. Collectively, these theories provided a robust foundation for constructing the conceptual framework, ensuring that the study captured both structural and behavioral aspects of change management in the NGO sector.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework consists of the independent and dependent variables. The independents variables were communication clarity, alignment of change initiatives, leadership strategy and organizational culture. The dependent variable was performance of NGOs in Kenya's shown in figure 1 below.
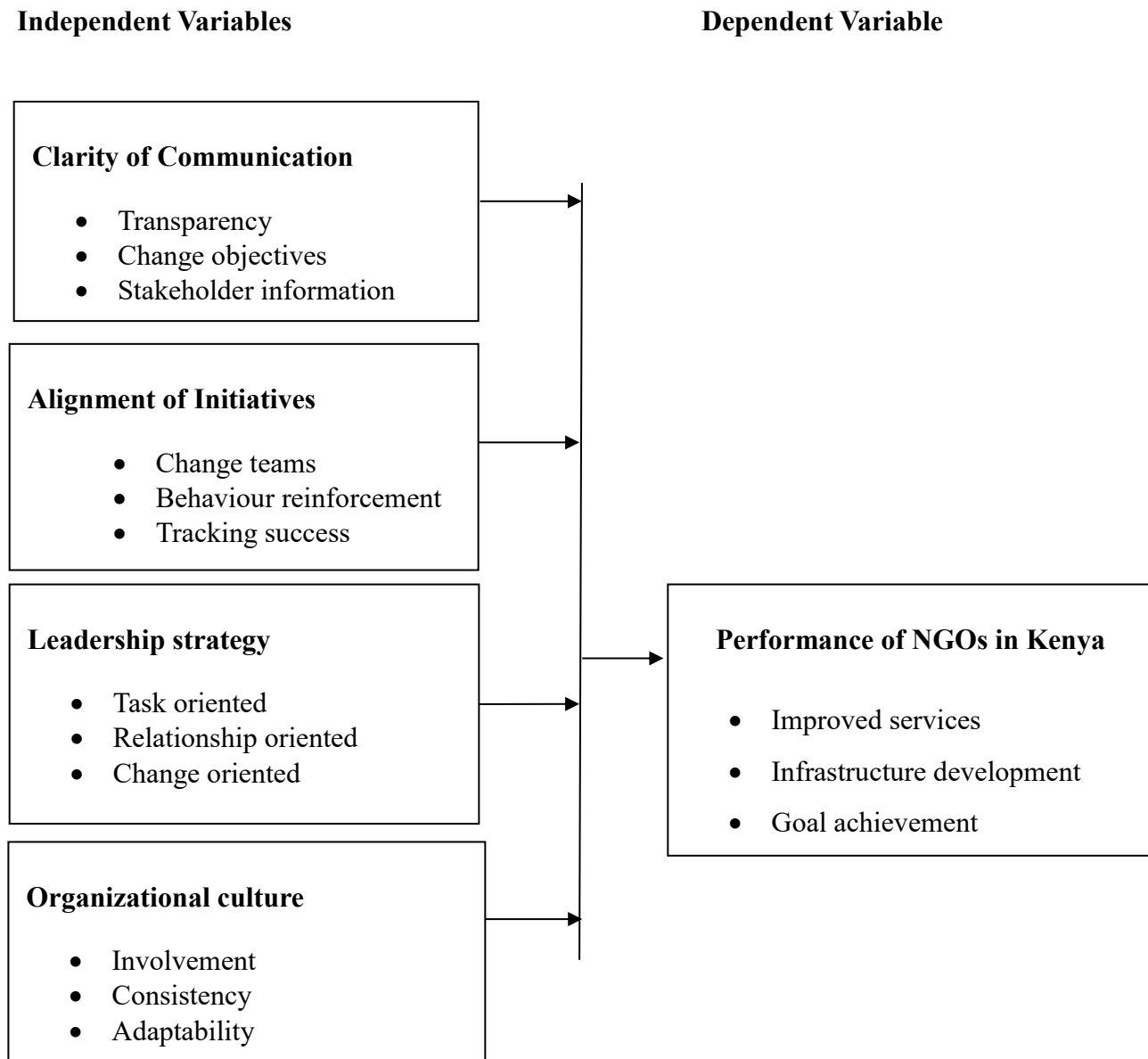
Independent Variables   **Dependent Variable**

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Empirical Review

Ebiringa (2024), studied the role of communication in change management across diverse business environments. The study found that effective communication is essential for organizations to adapt quickly to shifting customer needs, regulatory pressures, and competitive dynamics. Communication was shown to facilitate agile implementation of changes in processes, culture, and personnel, thereby supporting profitability and sustainability. However, the study focused on general business settings, leaving a gap in understanding how communication functions as a change management strategy within resource-constrained NGOs operating in devolved governance contexts.

Allam et al. (2024), emphasized the importance of strategy alignment, stakeholder engagement, adaptive leadership, and continuous evaluation in driving successful change initiatives. Their findings highlighted the need for leadership development and supportive regulatory frameworks to foster cultures open to change. Despite these insights, the study was situated within broader corporate environments and did not isolate how these factors interact within NGO structures, particularly in regions where institutional capacity and funding stability are limited.

Kiprotich and Nambuswa (2024), examined the influence of leadership strategy on performance within the County Government of West Pokot, Kenya. Their study revealed a strong positive relationship between leadership strategy and organizational performance, suggesting that strategic leadership plays a critical role in guiding change and achieving institutional goals. While the findings are relevant to public sector governance, the study did not explore how leadership strategies are adapted and applied within the operational frameworks of NGOs, which often rely on participatory leadership and decentralized decision-making.

Zamanam (2021), explored the challenges of changing organizational culture, identifying it as one of the most complex leadership tasks. Drawing on Cartwright and Cooper (1996), the study noted that during periods of rapid change, organizations tend to impose stricter controls, reducing individual autonomy. The proposed cultural continuum illustrated how different cultural types affect decision-making freedom. Although the study offers valuable insights into cultural dynamics, it did not address how NGOs often characterized by collaborative cultures, manage cultural transitions during strategic change processes.

Metin et al. (2024), investigated factors influencing the effectiveness and sustainability of NGOs, finding that environmental predictability and organizational structure were the most significant determinants. The study also emphasized the role of technological adaptation in enhancing organizational performance. Complementing these findings, Wraikat et al. (2017) established a

significant relationship between employee acceptance of technology and organizational climate, structure, and strategy implementation. However, both studies focused on general NGO performance and did not specifically examine how change management strategies such as communication, leadership, and cultural alignment contribute to performance outcomes in devolved Kenyan counties.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive research design. This study was conducted in Kisumu County. The target population for the study comprised of management and supervisors from the 64 NGOs in Kisumu. Since the study population was small, therefore, the study worked with entire population so adopted the census method. Data collection instrument were self-administered questionnaires. The research instrument were pretested at within the neighboring Siaya county so as not to interfere with the study sample. A pilot group of six (6) respondents were targeted. The findings of the pilot study were used to improve the data collection instruments. Face validity was essential in this study because it is a logical measure of change management strategies and performance. To ensure reliability the study used Cronbach's Alpha. To ensure reliability, the items were based on the estimates of variability of participants responding to the items. The research instruments were administered to the same respondents then tested for reliability. The data were reduced, organized, coded, edited, classified using a table and analyzed to bring out the meaning under each of the factors. and analyZed descriptively using IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SSPS). Pearson correlation analysis was used to test the relationship between variables in the study hypotheses. ANOVA and multiple linear regression analysis was adopted computed to determine the statistical relationship between the independent variable and the dependent. The multiple linear regressions model was as follows;

$$Y = \beta 0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon$$

RESULTS

Response Rate

The study target was to collect data among 64 respondents who were physically given the questionnaires or sent to their emails. The researcher was, however, able to receive back 60 filled questionnaires, which represented a 93.75% response rate, according to Shirali et al., (2018), a response rate of 50% is adequate, 60% is good whereas a response above 70% is considered ideal.

Descriptive Statistics

Participants rated their perceptions on a Likert scale of 1 to 5 whereby 1= strongly disagreed, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree and lastly 5=strongly agreed.

Descriptive Statistics on Communication Clarity

The purpose of this study section was to determine the level on which respondents agreed or disagreed regarding communication clarity. Participants rated their perceptions on a Likert scale of 1 to 5 whereby 1= strongly disagreed, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree and lastly 5=strongly agreed. The results are given in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on communication clarity

Statements	SD f	SD %	D f	D %	N f	N %	A f	A %	SA f	SA %	M	Std. dev
There is clear communication which allows for expectations to be set, questions to be answered, and concerns to be addressed.	-	-	11	7.7	4	2.8	20	63.4	22	26.1	4.01	0.773
Leaders effectively convey information and keep stakeholders informed	-	-	3	2.1	14	9.9	17	61.3	28	26.8	4.13	0.662
Transparency and honesty are taken as important components of communication	0.7	-	2	1.4	2	1.4	24	59.2	23	37.3	4.31	0.643
Leaders are honest about any potential challenges or drawbacks of the change	-	-	5	3.5	8	5.6	32	43.7	17	47.2	4.35	0.744
Leaders actively listen to stakeholders, fostering open dialogue,	7.7	-	0	-	17	12.0	19	48.9	25	31.7	3.96	1.068
Composite Mean											**4.11**	

Overall, the composite mean for just-in-time production was 4.11, indicating that respondents generally agreed that communication clarity impacts on performance of NGOs.

Descriptive Statistics On Alignment of Change Initiatives

The objective of this study section was to rate the perception of the respondents through statements related to change initiatives. The findings are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Alignment of Change Initiatives

Statements	SD		D		N		A		SA		M	Std. dev
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
The firm synchronizes its goals with its day-to-day operations	0	-	1	0.7	9	6.3	21	64.1	41	28.9	4.21	0.581
We bridge the gap between the visions set by leadership and the actions taken by teams	0	-	1	0.7	10	7.0	23	58.5	28	33.8	4.25	0.612
Policy initiatives are aligned with individual needs	0	-	5	3.5	15	10.6	14	31.0	38	54.9	4.37	0.813
We constantly update technology to meet evolving trends.	0	-	1	0.7	6	4.2	26	60.6	29	34.5	4.29	0.578
We balance regulatory demands and customer expectations to ensure stability.	0	-	3	2.1	0	-	26	39.4	23	58.5	4.59	0.615
Composite Mean											**4.29**	

Overall, through a composite mean of 4.29, the respondents agreed with the statements on the influence of alignment of change initiatives with performance of NGOs in Kisumu County.

Descriptive Statistics on Leadership Strategy
The study determined descriptive statistics on leadership strategy. Findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on Leadership Strategy

Statements	SD		D		N		A		SA		M	Std.
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		

											dev
Leaders develop compelling visions that articulate the desired future state of firms.	0	-	4	2.8	10	7.0	17	61.3	41	28.9	4.16	0.670
Actively engage stakeholders throughout the change process.	0	-	3	2.1	12	8.5	28	54.9	24	34.5	4.22	0.685
Anticipate and address resistance proactively	1	0.7	7	4.9	14	9.9	23	44.4	27	40.1	4.18	0.856
Equip employees with necessary skills and knowledge.	9	6.3	0	-	15	10.6	25	66.9	23	16.2	3.87	0.909
Leaders reinforce and sustain change	9	6.3	13	9.2	8	5.6	34	52.1	18	26.8	3.84	1.115
Composite mean											**4.05**	

The overall composite means of 4.05 suggests that leadership strategy received a high mean score.

Descriptive Statistics on Organizational Culture

The study further sought to determine the descriptive statistics on organizational culture on performance. Findings are presented in Table 4.

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Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Organizational Culture

Statement	SD		D		N		A		SA		M	Std. dev
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
The firm has shared values, beliefs, and behaviours that shape how employees interact and work together.	3	2.1	6	4.2	6	4.2	20	63.4	27	26.1	4.07	0.813
How employees react to change is influenced by the existing cultures.	0	-	2	1.4	8	5.6	23	44.4	29	48.6	4.37	0.591
We promote adaptability and openness to new ideas	0	-	1	0.7	4	2.8	25	38.7	22	57.7	4.40	0.664
We have cultivated a mindset that is ready for change.	0	-	8	5.6	6	7.7	26	32.4	27	54.2	4.54	0.591
As leaders, we model desired behaviors and encourage employee engagement	0	-	4	2.8	8	7.0	31	43.0	27	47.2	4.35	0.852
Composite Mean											**4.35**	

The composite mean was 4.35 which was evidence that organizational culture contributed positively to the study.

Descriptive Statistics on Performance of NGOs

The study sought to determine descriptive statistics on the performance of NGOs in Kisumu County. The findings are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics on Performance of NGOs

Performance	SD		D		N		A		SA		M	Std. dev
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Resource Utilization	0	-	3	2.1	6	4.2	25	52.8	28	40.8	4.32	0.658
Customer satisfaction	2	1.4	5	3.5	10	7.0	24	38.0	21	50.0	4.32	0.862
Better services	0	-	4	2.8	14	9.9	18	26.8	26	60.6	4.45	0.786
Infrastructure development	1	0.7	12	8.5	6	4.2	25	31.7	28	54.9	4.32	0.748
Service Delivery	8	5.6	1	0.7	13	9.2	22	51.4	27	33.1	4.06	0.980
Composite Mean											**4.29**	

A composite mean of 4.29 was an indication that the firms had reported a performance increase.

Correlation Analysis

Further tests for the independence of the independent variables were conducted through correlation analysis. The findings are presented in Table 6.

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Table 6: Correlations

		Communication	Alignment	Leadership	Organizational culture
Communication	Correlation Coefficient	1.000			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.			
	N	60			
Alignment	Correlation Coefficient	.311**	1.000		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.		
	N	60	60		
Leadership	Correlation Coefficient	.213*	.359**	1.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	.000	.	
	N	60	60	60	
Organizational culture	Correlation Coefficient	.131	.393**	.367**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.119	.000	.000	.
	N	60	60	60	60

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

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

Table 6 revealed that communication clarity and alignment of change initiatives had an r=0.311** and a p-value of 0.001<0.05 which implied that they had a positive and significant relationship. The correlation coefficient between communication clarity and leadership strategy was found to be 0.213**, with a p-value of 0.011<0.05, indicating that there is a positive and significant relationship between the two variables. On the other hand, the correlation coefficient between communication and leadership strategy was 0.131, with a p-value of 0.119>0.05, implying that while there is a positive relationship between the two variables, it is not statistically significant.

Regression Analysis

The study applied regression analysis to establish the relationship between four independent variables and the dependent variable. Results are presented in Tables 7, 8, and 9.

Model Summary

R-square is a measure of goodness of fit in regression analysis, which indicates the proportion of the variance in the dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variable (s). Findings are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.869[a]	.775	.732	.40345

a. Predictors: (Constant), communication, alignment, leadership strategy and organizational culture.

b. Dependent Variable: Performance

Table 7 indicated that the model had an R-square of 0.775 which implied that the four independent variables in the study explained 77.5% of the variations/changes in the performance. Other variables not included in the study explain 22.5% of the variations in the performance of NGOs in Kisumu County.

Analysis of Variance

The analysis of variance was used to depict the goodness of fit of the model, that is how well the data of the variable fits in the model. Results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	18.073	4	4.518	27.759	.000[b]
	Residual	22.299	137	.163		
	Total	**40.372**	**141**			

a. Dependent Variable: Performance of NGOs

b. Predictors: (Constant), communication, alignment, leadership strategy and organizational culture.

Findings presented in Table 8 revealed an F-ratio of 27.759 (df= 4,137) which was associated with a p-value of 0.001, which implied that variables in the model significantly predicted the performance of NGOs in Kisumu County.

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Regression Coefficients

The study sought to explain the individual influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable. Findings are presented on the beta values of the variables, t-statistics, and p-values in Table 9.

Table 9: Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1 (Constant)	-.450	.473		-.950	.344
Communication clarity	.263	.081	.222	3.229	.002
Alignment of change	.125	.116	.086	1.080	.282
Leadership strategy	.215	.073	.214	2.955	.004
Organizational culture	.517	.104	.392	4.998	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Performance of NGOs

The regression results in Table 4.19 show that the constant term had a coefficient (B) of -0.450, a t-value of -0.950, and a p-value of 0.344, indicating that it was not statistically significant and therefore not a reliable predictor of NGO performance in Kisumu County. Communication clarity had a positive and statistically significant effect on performance, with a coefficient (B) of 0.263, a t-value of 3.229, and a p-value of 0.002. This confirms that clear communication contributes meaningfully to NGO performance, supporting the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Alignment of change initiatives showed a positive but statistically insignificant relationship with performance, with a coefficient (B) of 0.125, a t-value of 1.080, and a p-value of 0.282. This suggests that while alignment may be conceptually relevant, it did not significantly influence performance in this context. Leadership strategy demonstrated a significant positive effect, with a coefficient (B) of 0.215, a t-value of 2.955, and a p-value of 0.004, indicating that strategic leadership plays a crucial role in driving NGO performance. Organizational culture emerged as the strongest predictor, with a coefficient (B) of 0.517, a t-value of 4.998, and a highly significant p-value of 0.000, confirming its substantial impact on performance.

The resulting regression model is:

$$Y = 0.263X_1 + 0.215X_2 + 0.517X_3 + \varepsilon.$$

Where:

Where X_1 was communication clarity, X_2 was leadership strategy, X_3 was Organizational culture and ε was the error term

Alignment of change initiatives and the constant were excluded from the final model due to their lack of statistical significance. This model underscores the importance of communication, leadership, and culture in enhancing NGO performance in Kisumu County.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The study revealed that respondents strongly agreed on the importance of communication clarity, alignment of change initiatives, leadership strategy, and organizational culture in influencing the performance of NGOs in Kisumu County. Communication clarity had a mean score of 4.11 and showed a statistically significant relationship with performance ($p = 0.011$), confirming its positive contribution. Alignment of change initiatives was rated highly (mean = 4.29) and had a significant correlation ($p = 0.004$), though regression results ($\beta = 0.125$, $t = 1.080$, $p = 0.282$) indicated it was not a statistically significant predictor. Leadership strategy was also positively rated (mean = 4.05), with a significant regression outcome ($\beta = 0.215$, $t = 2.955$, $p = 0.004$), highlighting its role in guiding change and fostering employee commitment. Organizational culture received the highest agreement (mean = 4.35) and emerged as the strongest predictor of performance ($\beta = 0.517$, $t = 4.998$, $p = 0.001$), underscoring its influence on employee responsiveness and the success of change initiatives.

Conclusions

The study concluded that effective change management in NGOs relies heavily on four interrelated factors: communication clarity, strategic alignment, leadership strategy, and organizational culture. Clear communication was found to be essential for building awareness, reducing uncertainty, and guiding stakeholders through transitions by delivering timely, relevant information and enabling feedback. Strategic alignment ensured that change initiatives are purposefully linked to organizational goals, preventing fragmented efforts and enhancing adaptability. Leadership emerged as a decisive factor, with self-aware and introspective leaders playing a critical role in fostering employee engagement and steering successful implementation. Lastly, organizational culture was identified as a foundational element that shapes how change is perceived and sustained, with cultures that embrace transformation significantly boosting the effectiveness of change initiatives and overall NGO performance in Kisumu County.

Recommendations

The study offered policy recommendations across four key areas; communication, strategic alignment, leadership, and organizational culture. It emphasized their collective role in effective change management within NGOs. It advocated for clear and collaborative communication

strategies that equip leaders and change agents with the tools, training, and support needed to motivate employees and clarify expectations. Strategic alignment should be embedded within organizational planning, with adequate resource allocation and prioritization of initiatives based on strategic value. Leadership was highlighted as central to managing human resources and navigating resistance, with successful communication enhancing change outcomes. Finally, the study underscored the importance of cultivating a culture that embraces change, where employees are adaptable and aligned with evolving goals, supported by committed leadership and inclusive training practices.

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