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STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AND PERFORMANCE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN BUSIA COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

Busia County in Kenya faces significant socio-economic challenges, with an MPI of 0.122, worse than neighbouring counties; raising concerns over leadership inefficiencies in optimizing NGO performance. This study examined the effect of strategic leadership practices (strategy formulation, communication, implementation and evaluation) on NGO performance. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected from 322 staff and project beneficiaries via structured questionnaires. Regression analysis was applied to test four hypotheses. Results showed that only strategy communication had a statistically significant positive effect on NGO performance ($B = 0.185$, $p = 0.013$), while formulation, implementation and evaluation had no significant impact ($p > 0.05$). Overall, the predictors showed a weak positive relationship ($R = 0.229$), explaining 5.2% of performance variance ($R^2 = 0.052$), with the model significant at $F(4,317) = 4.044$, $p = 0.003$.

Keywords: Strategy formulation, strategy communication, strategy implementation, strategy evaluation, NGO performance



INTRODUCTION

Strategy is broadly understood as the set of methods organizations use to align with their environment and pursue performance (Aladag et al., 2020; Fahad et al., 2020), with Ansoff (1965) framing it as the firm–environment link and strategic intent capturing a firm’s sustained drive to excel (Davis & Bendickson, 2018; Köseoğlu et al., 2018). Strategic leadership operationalizes this intent through formulation, communication, implementation and evaluation (Capon, 2016; Nyong’a & Maina, 2019). Strategy formulation involves diagnosing threats, opportunities and internal capabilities to craft action plans (Ameen et al., 2018; Dalelo et al., 2025), though empirical results are mixed (Guo et al., 2018). Strategy communication, the deliberate flow of information and feedback needed to coordinate people and resources; underpins effective implementation and accountability (Boshnjaku et al., 2025; Shamsan & Otieno, 2015); and is increasingly enabled by integrated information systems (Boshnjaku et al., 2025). Implementation depends on that communication plus adequate resources and culture (Thompson et al., 2007; Ramírez & Selsky, 2016), while evaluation provides feedback for corrective action and requires monitoring capacity and resources (Grant, 2016; Holl et al., 2024; Vecchiato, 2015).

Organizational performance spans financial and non-financial dimensions to include profitability, service quality, stakeholder outcomes, sustainability and fundraising efficiency for NGOs (Al-Obthani & Ameen, 2019; Alfalasi et al., 2020; Alshamsi et al., 2019, 2020; Aboramad & Borgonovi, 2016; Albreki et al., 2019). NGOs are independent, non-profit entities operating under boards and typically funded by donations to deliver programs in areas like gender empowerment, education and health (Kefa & Iravo, 2018; Waiganjo et al., 2017; Ashoka & Mango, 2015). In contexts such as Busia County with an HDI of 0.43 and high poverty levels (Busia County Integrated Report, 2020; KPHC, 2019), NGOs have achieved notable program impacts but face persistent resource, capacity and contextual constraints that limit strategy effectiveness and scalability.

Statement of the Problem

Theoretical and empirical evidence suggests that optimal strategic leadership should produce measurable performance improvements (Murataliyevna, 2025; Poister, 2010). Effective strategy formulation creates clear roadmaps (Aidah, Waiganjo & Njeru, 2025), while robust communication ensures stakeholder alignment (Kaplan & Norton, 2001). Proper implementation converts plans into action (Nutt, 1989) and systematic evaluation enables adaptive management (Bryson, 2018). When these elements function synergistically, NGOs should demonstrate: 20-30% higher project completion rates (Bryson, 2018), 15-25%

improved service delivery efficiency (Poister, 2010) and significantly higher beneficiary satisfaction scores (Brown & Moore, 2001); outcomes currently lacking in Busia County's NGO sector according to baseline data from OPHI (2024). Busia County has 203 registered NGOs chipping in different programmes to address poverty eradication initiatives among the vulnerable and the less fortunate. Even with some of the NGOs addressing housing, education and health issues within Busia County, Busia County, Kenya still faces persistent socio-economic challenges, with a Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) of 0.122, 41.8% of the population vulnerable to poverty and 5.3% experiencing severe poverty. In comparison, neighbouring counties such as Siaya (MPI 0.103), Kakamega (MPI 0.096), Kisumu (MPI 0.065) and Vihiga (MPI 0.079) report lower poverty indices and vulnerability levels, highlighting disparities in poverty alleviation efforts (Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative [OPHI], 2024). Despite these pressing needs, Busia County is served by a smaller number of active program implementers compared to its neighbours, with Kisumu County hosting 421 active NGOs, Kakamega 385 and Vihiga 372, far exceeding Busia's limited number of initiatives (NGOs Co-ordination Board, 2023). These disparities could be caused by inefficiencies in leadership and coordination. Moreover, limited research exists on the relationship between leadership practices and NGO performance in Busia County, particularly when compared to neighbouring regions with stronger programmatic presence.

Purpose of the Study

This study sought to ascertain the effects of Strategic Leadership Practices on Performance of Non-Governmental Organizations in Busia County, Kenya.

Objectives of the Study

- i. To assess the effect of strategy formulation on performance of Non-Governmental Organizations in Busia County, Kenya.
- ii. To determine the effect of strategy communication on performance of Non-Governmental Organizations in Busia County, Kenya.
- iii. To examine the effect of strategy implementation on performance of Non-Governmental Organizations in Busia County, Kenya.
- iv. To assess the effect of strategy evaluation on performance of Non-Governmental Organizations in Busia County, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is grounded in three theoretical frameworks: the Resource-Based View (RBV) as the main theory, supported by Contingency Theory and the Balanced Scorecard (BSC). Originating from Penrose (1959) and expanded by scholars like Schroeder et al. (2002) and Prahalad and Hamel (2009), the RBV emphasizes that competitive advantage stems from leveraging unique internal resources rather than focusing solely on external factors. Pearce and Robinson (2007) argued that effective control and creative utilization of such resources are more critical to success than opportunity scanning. In this study, RBV directly relates to strategic leadership, positioning internal resource regulation and distribution as core leadership functions that drive superior performance outcomes. Contingency Theory, introduced by Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) and later expanded by Fiedler (1997), argues that volatile and uncertain environments require decentralized decision-making and adaptive management to ensure rapid responses. It supports devolved leadership structures that foster innovation, creativity and responsiveness, making it relevant to the study's focus on strategic leadership. The Balanced Scorecard (Kaplan & Norton, 1992) complements these perspectives by integrating financial and non-financial measures across four dimensions (financial, customer, internal processes and learning and growth) providing a comprehensive performance evaluation framework.

Empirical Literature

Empirical literature reveals varied insights on the link between strategic leadership practices and organizational performance, with many studies limited by context, sector or scope. Internationally, Hernández-Perlines and Araya-Castillo (2020) in Spain found servant leadership boosted Third Sector performance through innovation, while Rehman et al. (2019) in Pakistan observed leadership's influence except in planning and culture. Meresa (2019) in Ethiopia confirmed strong strategy–performance links in credit and savings institutions and Köseoğlu et al. (2020) in Hong Kong hotels emphasized environmental scanning over collaboration. Fahad et al. (2020) in the UAE linked leadership to improved processes, while in Kenya, studies such as Kefa and Iravo (2018), Muriithia and Muriuki (2024), Maritim and Obuba (2024) and Osman (2019) demonstrated positive effects of planning, budgeting, stakeholder involvement and strategic control, though each was limited by narrow organizational focus, sector specificity or exclusion of beneficiaries. Research on communication, culture and evaluation further underscores their performance relevance, albeit with similar limitations. Abdikani and Ouma (2024) in Somalia and Hashim and Sasaka (2018) at SHARDO confirmed structured and tactical communication improved NGO outcomes, while Lerai (2023) and Chepkosgei et al. (2020) found strong correlations in parastatals. In Kenya, Odhiambo and Njuguna (2021), Enzama (2020) and Mutinda

(2020) emphasized participatory approaches, cultural consistency and plan–beneficiary alignment as performance drivers, though sector and geographic scope constrained applicability. Leonard (2024), Nyambaka and Sagini (2024) and Etaan et al. (2024) linked implementation and evaluation to NGO performance, with Kimani (2018) and Daudi and Mbugua (2018) highlighting the role of monitoring and evaluation, though both in non-NGO or single-firm contexts.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a correlational research design to examine the relationships between strategic leadership practices and the performance of NGOs in Busia County, Kenya. The design was selected because it allows for the systematic analysis of associations between variables without experimental manipulation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Target Population and Sampling

According to NGO Coordination Board Sector Report of 2021/2022, there were 203 NGOs operating in Busia County (NGO Coordination Board, 2023). The study targeted 1969 NGO staff and an infinite population of project beneficiaries from the NGOs in Busia County of Kenya.

Table 1: Target Population

Category	Total
NGO staff	1969
Beneficiaries	Infinite

Source: NGO Coordination Board (2023)

The study selected 322 staff of NGOs using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) method; due to existence of a finite population. For the project beneficiaries, the study employed non-probabilistic sampling specifically the snowball sampling at the NGO level, collecting responses until saturation or logistical limits were reached; as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Sample Size Determination

Category	Total	Sample	Description
NGO staff	1969	322	Krejcie & Morgan (1970)
Project beneficiaries	Infinite	547	Snowball sampling

To account for non-response among NGO staff, the final sample size for NGO staff was adjusted upward by dividing the computed sample (322) by a conservative response rate of

80%, based on similar studies in the Kenyan NGO sector (Muchilwa & Okoth., 2021; Mwangi & Wanyama, 2020). This adjustment ensures robust data collection despite potential non-participation, aligning with methodological practices. However, for NGO beneficiaries, since snowball sampling relies on participant referrals until saturation, a non-response adjustment was not applied to beneficiaries. Adjusted Sample= Initial Sample/Response Rate = 322/0.8= 402.5≈403. Thus, the study targeted 403 NGO staff to ensure sufficient responses even with an estimated 20% non-response rate; as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Sample Size Adjusted for Non-Response

Category	N	Initial Sample	Adjusted sample	Description
NGO staff	1969	322	403	Krecjie & Morgan (1970)
Project beneficiaries	Infinite	547	547	Snowball sampling

Data Collection Methods

Primary data was obtained through two sets of semi-structured questionnaires, one for project beneficiaries and another for NGO staff; given that respondents were educated and capable of providing informed responses. Each questionnaire contained two parts: demographic information and thematic questions aligned to the study's concepts. A pilot test, conducted on 10% of the sample at World Youth International–Mama Ann's Odede Project in Siaya County, assessed the instrument's clarity. Validity was ensured through expert review (Fernandez-Gomez et al., 2020), particularly by the research supervisor and measured using Content Validity Index (CVI), with the 0.78 threshold recommended by Lynn (1986). Validity refers to the instrument's ability to attain and maintain accuracy (Borg & Gall, 1986). Reliability, defined as consistent results over repeated trials (Patterson et al., 2018), was tested using the split-halves method, where the questionnaire was divided into two sets and administered sequentially to compare responses. Cronbach's Alpha was then calculated, with the study achieving 0.86; above the acceptable 0.8 threshold. All variables also exceeded this benchmark (see Table 4).

Table 4: Cronbach's Alpha Results per Variable

Variable	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Performance	6	0.85	Reliable
Strategy Formulation	5	0.84	Reliable
Strategy Communication	5	0.86	Reliable
Strategy Implementation	5	0.88	Reliable
Strategy Evaluation	5	0.85	Reliable

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Collected data was cleaned to remove errors and omissions, then coded, entered and analysed using SPSS version 22. Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation) were used, alongside inferential statistics, specifically Pearson's correlation and linear regression, to test relationships between the dependent and independent variables. As the Likert-scale questionnaires produced ordinal-level data, transformation to interval-level format was necessary to apply parametric techniques. Following methodological recommendations (Harpe, 2022; Norman, 2023), composite mean scores were computed by aggregating and averaging items for each construct, producing single interval-level variables that reflect respondents' perceptions.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to strict research ethics, safeguarding participants' rights and ensuring responsible reporting of findings. Informed consent was obtained to guarantee voluntary, knowledgeable participation and humane treatment was maintained throughout. Confidentiality, anonymity and privacy were rigorously protected. The research was conducted with integrity and a focus on improving NGO operations through strategic intent.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study first aims to evaluate the response rate achieved during the data collection process. The results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Response Rate

Category	Sample	Obtained	Response Rate (%)
NGO Staff	403	297	73.697
Project Beneficiaries	Non-probalistic	547	

The study achieved strong participation, with 73.7% of staff in Busia County responding, indicating high engagement and credibility of the findings. For beneficiaries, 547 responses were obtained through non-probabilistic sampling; suggesting data saturation.

Beneficiaries' Ratings of the NGOs' Performance

Beneficiaries in Busia County rated NGO performance based on service satisfaction, project completion and successful service delivery. Descriptive statistics (Table 6) show

generally positive evaluations, indicating effectiveness in meeting community needs across these key performance indicators.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics for the beneficiaries' ratings of the NGOs' performance

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I can rate the NGO as attaining satisfactory in its services to me as a beneficiary	547	4.4040	.81617
The NGO delivered its services to the expected levels to me as a beneficiary	547	4.3711	.80482
The NGO has successfully met its objectives in the projects that I was benefiting from	547	4.3126	.86818
The NGO has effectively completed most of its projects that I was benefiting from	547	4.2340	.91792
Valid N (listwise)	547		

Beneficiaries in Busia County generally rate NGO performance highly, with strong mean scores across service quality ($M = 4.4040$, $SD = 0.81617$), service delivery to expected levels ($M = 4.3711$, $SD = 0.80482$) and achievement of project objectives ($M = 4.3126$, $SD = 0.86818$). The lowest score, project completion ($M = 4.2340$, $SD = 0.91792$), still indicates favourable views but shows the greatest variability, suggesting inconsistencies in finalization. These results align with Abdikani and Ouma (2024), who link communication to service satisfaction and Kimani (2018), who notes execution disparities. Overall, while NGOs meet their mandates, greater consistency, oversight and targeted improvements are needed for equitable impact.

Strategy Formulation

The descriptive statistics for strategy formulation among NGOs in Busia County provide insight into the inclusivity and external influence on the strategic planning process.

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics for strategy formulation

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Strategy planning is an all-inclusive affair in the organization	297	4.4040	.82510
The strategic design adopted by the organization is agreed on by staff	297	4.2290	.93076
Strategy planning in the organization is done by the donors	297	2.0640	1.45865
The strategic design adopted by the organization is adopted from donors	297	1.9966	1.38158
Valid N (listwise)	297		

Descriptive statistics show that NGOs in Busia County emphasize inclusive, collaborative and locally owned strategic planning, with high agreement on stakeholder involvement ($M = 4.4040$, $SD = 0.82510$) and staff consensus ($M = 4.2290$). Donor influence is minimal, as reflected in low means for donor-driven strategy ($M = 2.0640$) and donor-adopted strategies ($M = 1.9966$) with high variability ($SD > 1.45$). These results align with Maritim and Obuba (2024) on the benefits of locally grounded strategies but contrast with Mogoi et al. (2024), who found donor-led planning more common in urban settings, highlighting the role of context in NGO governance.

Strategy Communication

The descriptive statistics for strategy communication among NGOs in Busia County provide an understanding of how well strategy-related information is disseminated and managed.

Table 8: Descriptive Statistics for strategy communication

	N	Mean	SD
The organization disburses information on strategy implementation to all staff categories	297	4.2222	.85292
Coordination of strategic teams is done by the organization locally	297	4.1279	.96761
The organization has adopted a top-down mode of communication in matters strategy	297	3.8316	1.38230
Coordination of strategic teams is controlled by the donors	297	1.9697	1.39585
Valid N (listwise)	297		

NGOs in Busia County demonstrate strong internal communication and coordination in strategy implementation, with high agreement on information sharing across staff ($M = 4.2222$) and effective team coordination ($M = 4.1279$), reflecting strong local operational control. While top-down communication is moderately common ($M = 3.8316$), donor influence on coordination is minimal ($M = 1.9697$), indicating significant local autonomy.

These findings align with Lerai (2023) on the role of clear communication in enhancing performance but contrast with Abdikani and Ouma (2024), who found bottom-up approaches more effective. A shift toward more participatory communication could further boost cohesion and effectiveness.

Strategy Implementation

The descriptive statistics for strategy implementation provide insights into how well NGOs in Busia County are executing their strategies.

Table 9: Descriptive Statistics for strategy implementation

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Top management are always committed to strategy implementation in the organization	297	4.1650	.84812
The organizational culture is conducive for strategy implementation	297	4.1347	.87883
Leadership teams are formed for strategy implementation in the organization	297	4.1145	.82222
Implementation strategy adopted in the organization is donor – based	297	2.6936	1.54561
Valid N (listwise)	297		

Descriptive statistics show that NGOs in Busia County have a strong internal base for strategy implementation, with high ratings for top management commitment (M = 4.1650), supportive organizational culture (M = 4.1347) and dedicated leadership teams (M = 4.1145). These findings align with Onchieku and Ragui (2019), who highlight leadership and culture as drivers of strategy success. The low rating for donor-driven strategies (M = 2.6936) indicates strategic independence, contrasting Etaan et al. (2024) in Turkana, where donor influence is central. Overall, the NGOs exhibit cohesion, strong leadership and self-directed strategy execution.

Strategy Evaluation

The descriptive statistics for strategy evaluation provide insights into the methods used by NGOs in Busia County to assess their strategy implementation.

Table 10: Descriptive Statistics for Strategy Evaluation

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Technology based evaluation methods for strategy implementation are adopted in the organization	297	3.5690	1.01481
Random risks evaluation for strategy implementation occurs in the organization	297	3.3805	1.04624
Questionnaires are used for evaluating strategy implementation in the organization	297	3.2256	1.29433
Automated evaluation tools are used for evaluating strategy implementation in the organization	297	3.1785	1.31717
Valid N (listwise)	297		

In Busia County, NGOs show moderate adoption of evaluation methods for strategy implementation, with technology-based evaluations ($M = 3.5690$) and random risk assessments ($M = 3.3805$) moderately applied, while questionnaires ($M = 3.2256$) and automated tools ($M = 3.1785$) are underused. This partial integration of digital and systematic approaches reflects limited evaluation rigor, echoing Kimani's (2018) observation that many Kenyan NGOs lack robust evaluation systems for continuous improvement. The findings highlight the need to strengthen evaluation frameworks through greater adoption of automated and digital tools to enhance evidence-based and adaptive strategies.

Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis in Table 11 aimed to evaluate the relationships among strategy formulation, communication, implementation, evaluation and the performance of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Busia County, Kenya.

Table 11: Correlations for Strategic Leadership and Performance

		Strategy Formulation	Strategy Communication	Strategy Implementation	Strategy Evaluation	NGO Performance
Strategy Formulation	Pearson Correlation	1	.449**	.320**	.213**	.105
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.070
Strategy Communication	Pearson Correlation	.449**	1	.351**	.244**	.203**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
Strategy Implementation	Pearson Correlation	.320**	.351**	1	.441**	.151**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.009
Strategy Evaluation	Pearson Correlation	.213**	.244**	.441**	1	.138*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.017
NGO Performance	Pearson Correlation	.105	.203**	.151**	.138*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.070	.000	.009	.017	
	N	297	297	297	297	297

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

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

The study found that strategy formulation had a weak and statistically non-significant correlation with NGO performance ($r = 0.105$, $p = 0.070$), implying it has little standalone influence unless supported by mechanisms like stakeholder engagement or strategic controls, as observed by Muriithia and Muriuki (2024) and Fahad et al. (2020). Strategy communication showed the strongest positive relationship ($r = 0.203$, $p < 0.001$), affirming its role in fostering alignment and accountability, consistent with Lerai (2023) and Abdikani and Ouma (2024), though its moderate strength suggests possible limitations from top-down approaches and weak feedback loops, as noted by Mogoi et al. (2024). Strategy implementation recorded a significant but weaker correlation ($r = 0.151$, $p = 0.009$), partly aligning with Odhiambo and Njuguna (2021), with Busia NGOs likely constrained by staffing, agility and stakeholder buy-in; factors emphasized by Onchieku and Ragui (2019). Strategy evaluation also showed a modest positive correlation ($r = 0.138$, $p = 0.017$), supporting findings by Kimani (2018) and Leonard (2024).

Hypothesis Testing

The hypotheses were evaluated using regression analysis and the results are provided in Tables 12, 13 and 14.

Table 12: Model Summary for Hypothesis Testing

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.229 ^a	.052	.040	.73237

a. predictors: (constant), Strategy evaluation, Strategy formulation, Strategy communication, Strategy implementation

The combined predictors showed a weak positive relationship with NGO performance ($R = 0.229$), explaining only 5.2% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.052$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.040$). This indicates that while these strategy dimensions have some influence, most performance variation is driven by other unaccounted factors. The relatively high standard error (0.73237) further reflects substantial unexplained variability.

Table 13: ANOVA^a for Hypothesis Testing

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	8.676	4	2.169	4.044	.003 ^b
	Residual	156.619	292	.536		
	Total	165.295	296			

a. Dependent Variable: NGO_Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Strategy evaluation, Strategy formulation, Strategy communication, Strategy implementation

The regression model was statistically significant ($F = 4.044$, $p = 0.003$), indicating that at least one predictor significantly influences NGO performance; and the model's explanatory power is unlikely due to chance.

Table 14: Coefficients^a for Hypothesis Testing

Model	Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.	
	Coefficients		Coefficients			
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
	(Constant)	3.048	.304		10.011	.000
1	Strategy formulation	-.004	.069	-.004	-.064	.949
	Strategy communication	.185	.074	.165	2.506	.013
	Strategy implementation	.074	.079	.063	.942	.347
	Strategy evaluation	.057	.051	.071	1.114	.266

a. Dependent Variable: NGO_Performance

Regression results show that strategy communication significantly and positively influences NGO performance ($\beta = 0.185$, $t = 2.506$, $p = 0.013$), leading to rejection of H02. This aligns with Abdikani and Ouma (2024) and Lerai (2023), who reported strong positive impacts of structured, participatory communication on performance, though the current study's moderate effect may reflect partial adoption of inclusive methods, as noted by Mogoi et al. (2024). In contrast, strategy formulation ($\beta = -0.004$, $p = 0.949$), strategy implementation ($\beta = 0.074$, $p = 0.347$) and strategy evaluation ($\beta = 0.057$, $p = 0.266$) showed no statistically significant effects. These findings diverge from Muriithia and Muriuki (2024) and Fahad et al. (2020), who found formulation impactful; from Odhiambo and Njuguna (2021) and Onchieku and Ragui (2019), who highlighted the role of implementation; and from Kimani (2018) and Leonard (2024), who stressed the performance gains of evaluation.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The study examined the effects of strategy formulation, communication, implementation and evaluation on the performance of NGOs in Busia County, Kenya. Among these, only strategy communication showed a consistent and statistically significant positive effect, though it remained largely top-down. Strategy formulation was inclusive but had a very weak insignificant link to performance. Implementation and evaluation lost significance in the multivariate model, indicating reliance on integration with other functions. The findings highlight strategy communication as the core driver of NGO performance. The study concludes that NGOs should

adopt a cohesive, feedback-driven strategic leadership approach where clear communication anchors coordinated formulation, integrated implementation and robust evaluation.

CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

NGOs in Busia County should make strategic communication central to performance by using interactive, transparent and inclusive channels at all levels. Strategy formulation must shift from paper-based plans to realistic, community-informed approaches aligned with available resources. While implementation and evaluation were not statistically strong, they still require better structures, tracking systems and real-time feedback. NGOs should also explore other performance drivers such as leadership quality, organizational culture and stakeholder engagement. Policymakers should support capacity building, mandate strategic audits and create knowledge-sharing forums to strengthen sector-wide strategic management. Overall, a holistic, adaptive approach that reflects real operating conditions is essential. The study's scope was limited to Busia County, restricting generalization. Its focus on strategic dimensions excluded factors like governance, leadership and funding. The cross-sectional design prevented assessing long-term effects and reliance on self-reported data risked bias. Future research should use longitudinal and mixed-method designs, broaden the scope and create models suited to resource-constrained NGOs.

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