

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND PERFORMANCE OF THE NYANDARUA COUNTY ASSEMBLY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Performance in the public sector, which includes the Nyandarua County Assembly, is to ensure a constant flow of service delivery, accountability, and socio-economic development. As a major legislative unit, the County Assembly plays an important role in making laws, overseeing the government, and delivering public representation. Nevertheless, delays in legislative processes, including the low rate of passing bills and laws, and inadequate oversight of the County Executive, have caused stakeholder complaints to increase. The primary aim of this study was to investigate the effect of strategic planning on the performance of the Nyandarua County Assembly.

Methodology: A descriptive survey research design was adopted. A primary data methodology was adopted using a closed questionnaire for data collection. Questionnaires were administered to 103 sampled employees and elected officials of the Nyandarua County Assembly, yielding a response rate of 94.2%. Data collected was coded and entered into SPSS version 25 software and analyzed quantitatively to

generate both descriptive and inferential statistics.

Findings: The study revealed that strategic planning (Beta = 0.341; $p = 0.000$; $p < 0.05$) had a statistically significant and positive effect on organizational performance of the Nyandarua County Assembly. The regression model ($R = 0.843$; $R^2 = 0.711$) indicated that strategic planning, together with other strategic management practices, explained 71.1% of the variation in performance. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The study recommended that the Nyandarua County Assembly should institutionalize formal strategic planning cycles involving broad stakeholder participation, align strategic plans with County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs), and conduct regular reviews of strategic plans to reflect changing governance priorities and community needs.

Keywords: Strategic Management Practices, Strategic Planning, And Performance.

INTRODUCTION

Organizational performance is used as a measurement and source of information by every public and private entity regarding its efficiency in realizing its objectives and goals. In the view of Richard et al. (2009), organizational effectiveness consists of three main phenomena: financial results, winning in the product markets, and dividends to stockholders. In government agencies, performance is measured mostly in terms of efficiency, transparency, accountability, and the ability to deliver quality services (Boyne, 2003). Similarly, in the case of legislative bodies, performance reflects the power to enact laws, exercise oversight, allocate resources, and communicate with the public.

Legislative institutions around the world, like parliaments and councils, have been entrusted with critical roles in governance such as making laws, representing diverse constituencies, and supervising the executive branch. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (2022) states that the effectiveness of legislative bodies around the globe is largely determined by institutional capacity, strategic planning, and the extent to which public needs are met. In developed democracies like the United Kingdom and Canada, performance measurement frameworks such as the Balanced Scorecard have become part of the system that monitors the efficiency and impact of parliamentary work (Smith, 2018). Nevertheless, many legislatures continue to struggle with inefficiencies caused by bureaucracy, political stalemates, and limited stakeholder engagement, necessitating stronger strategic management interventions.

Kenya's County Assemblies were introduced by the Constitution of Kenya 2010 as the main drivers of devolution and local governance. The Office of the Controller of Budget (2023) has continued to report low absorption of development expenditure, poor fiscal management, and delays in legislation, including in the Nyandarua County Assembly. Njenga (2020), Wambua (2021), and Ndirangu (2023) have consistently identified insufficient strategic planning as a core reason for these performance deficiencies. This study therefore focused on strategic planning as a strategic management practice with the potential to address the performance challenges of the Nyandarua County Assembly.

Strategic planning is the process of clarifying what the organization intends to do, prioritizing its activities, and distributing its resources in such a way that its goals are reached (Bryson, 2018). In the context of this study, strategic planning is assessed through goal setting, strategy formulation, and implementation of plans. The Balanced Scorecard framework, developed by Kaplan and Norton (1992), was used to evaluate performance across dimensions of financial accountability, internal operational efficiency, stakeholder satisfaction, and institutional learning and growth.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Contingency Theory

Fred Fiedler first presented the Contingency Theory in 1964 as a leadership and management framework claiming that the effectiveness of a managerial strategy is dependent on the prevailing circumstances. Researchers like Lawrence and Lorsch (1967), Donaldson (2001), and Mintzberg (1994) later developed the theory further to cover organizational design and strategic management, pointing out that no single strategy or structure is universally effective. Company success is determined by the harmonious interaction between favorable environmental conditions and the management practices adopted internally (Fiedler, 1964).

The Contingency Theory is relevant to this study since it highlights the need for flexibility and strategic alignment, particularly in strategic planning. It indicates that planning should be tailored to the Assembly's legislative environment, resource limitations, stakeholder needs, and governance structures. A rigid, one-size-fits-all strategic plan may prove ineffective if the political dynamics or demands of devolved governance are not taken into account. The theory

therefore backs the positioning of strategic planning as a primary factor in this study, stressing that its usefulness is directly proportional to how well it is synchronized with the operational realities of the Nyandarua County Assembly (Mugambi & Njoroge, 2022).

The Balanced Scorecard Model

The Balanced Scorecard (BSC) was presented by Kaplan and Norton in 1992 as a strategic performance evaluation tool that aimed to cover a more comprehensive organizational performance view than traditional monetary performance measures. Due to its flexibility and overall perspective, the model, which was initially meant for the private sector, is now widely accepted by the public sector as well. Kaplan (2005) proposes performance evaluation through four perspectives: learning and growth, internal process, customer and stakeholder, and financial.

In the context of organizational performance, the BSC contributes to the overall objectives of the firm through optimum utilization of resources. The scorecard shows how dissimilar perspectives help organizations align their everyday activities with long-term strategic goals. For county assemblies, the BSC is particularly relevant because it allows for the evaluation of performance across the aspects of financial accountability, internal operational efficiency, stakeholder satisfaction, and institutional learning and growth. This study applies the BSC as an evaluative framework to measure the effect of strategic planning on the Nyandarua County Assembly's performance (Kaplan & Norton, 1996).

Resource-Based Theory

Birger Wernerfelt (1984) originated the Resource-Based Theory, which was later advanced by Barney (1991). The theory posits that organizations can gain a lasting competitive advantage through the strategic acquisition, cultivation, and utilization of their major internal resources. Barney (1991) qualifies these resources as rare, valuable, unique, and non-substitutable (VRIN). In the context of public sector organizations like county assemblies, the Resource-Based Theory reveals the extent to which human capital, financial resources, and technological systems impact institutional performance and service delivery.

This theory is relevant to the current study as it supports the argument that variation in performance among County Assemblies is not solely due to external challenges but also to different competencies in internal resource management. Strategic planning, which directs internal resources toward institutional priorities, is therefore a critical practice for achieving sustained performance (Barney, 1991).

Empirical Review on Strategic Planning and Organizational Performance

Mwangi (2016) investigated the effect of strategic planning on the performance of state corporations in Kenya. The study disclosed a very strong positive association between formal strategic planning steps like goal-setting, environmental scanning, and strategy formulation, and organizational performance as judged by the quality of service delivery and financial accountability. However, Mwangi's research was centered on state corporations within the executive branch of the national government, which differs considerably from devolved

legislative entities that function under changing political and representational arrangements. The current study bridges this gap by scrutinizing the impact of strategic planning on organizational performance in the devolved legislative context of the Nyandarua County Assembly.

Waithaka and Gichure (2019) focused on strategic planning and execution in county governments in Kenya. The research found that public trust and performance were higher in counties with well-organized strategic plans aligned to County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs), with technical personnel and political participants involved in the scheduling process. However, their study focused mainly on the executive functions of county governments and did not examine legislative arms like county assemblies, which perform different functions and face different performance difficulties. The present study therefore fills this gap by evaluating the practice of strategic planning in the Nyandarua County Assembly and its effect on legislative performance metrics.

Mwangi and Wainaina (2017) investigated the influence of strategic planning on service delivery in county governments across all 47 counties in Kenya. The counties that made and followed through with comprehensive strategic plans improved their service efficiency, financial management, and stakeholder engagement. The research pointed out that political stability and institutional commitment are foundational elements for success of strategic planning in public sector organizations. The present research is closely related in context, with a specific focus on the Nyandarua County Assembly, thus allowing for a more profound investigation of localized strategic planning challenges.

Ferlie and Ongaro (2020) conducted a cross-comparative study on strategic planning of public institutions in Europe, finding that states with well-connected strategic planning frameworks developed more efficient public services, gained fiscal discipline, and won stakeholder trust. The research proposed further studies on flexible strategic planning models that would adjust to ever-changing policy scenarios. The present study develops on these findings by looking at how strategic planning improves public sector performance, focusing on the Nyandarua County Assembly in Kenya and thus filling the gap in county-specific strategic planning research.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey research design was the choice of this research. A descriptive survey is a type of research that allows for an extensive investigation of the relationships between the variables and the study's quantitative and qualitative aspects and at the same time, it can capture the study's quantitative and qualitative areas. An empirical model was used in determining the relationship between strategic planning and organizational performance in the Nyandarua County Assembly. The study area was the Nyandarua County Assembly headquarters situated in Ol Kalou, Nyandarua County, Kenya. The population for this study comprised 139 individuals, including 39 Members of County Assembly (MCAs), 4 most senior managers, 12 mid-tier managers, and 84 administrative personnel.

The study adopted a stratified random sampling technique to ensure that different participant groups were well represented. Using Yamane's (1967) formula at 95% confidence level, a sample size of 103 respondents was selected. A response rate of 94.2% was achieved, reflecting a more than adequate sufficiency to analyze data. Content and face validity were conducted to measure the extent to which the instrument measured what it purported to measure. Reliability of the research instrument was measured using Cronbach's Alpha, with a cutoff coefficient of 0.7 and above considered a strong measure of reliability. The Cronbach's Alpha for strategic planning was 0.827, confirming strong reliability.

Quantitative data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 25 software. Descriptive statistics, specifically measures of central tendency and dispersion, were calculated to profile the respondents and study variables. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (r) was derived to show the nature and strength of the relationships, while multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis and determine the effect of strategic planning on organizational performance.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Descriptive Statistics

The study required respondents to rate their agreement with statements using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree. The percentage means and standard deviations for the variable were computed and presented. The aggregate mean for the variable strategic planning is 3.82. When rounded off to the nearest whole number, the aggregate mean becomes 4, implying that the majority of the respondents agreed that strategic planning positively affects organizational performance. The aggregate mean of standard deviation for strategic planning is 0.878, indicating that there was a low variability in the responses.

In emphasizing the influence of strategic planning, Wanjiru and Theuri (2022) stated that county assemblies with well-defined strategic goals were more productive in legislative functions and had more effective oversight than those with vague or poorly communicated objectives. Similarly, Kariuki and Njihia (2021) observed that efficient strategic planning in county assemblies results in better ballot-processing, increased public participation, and improved accountability. The descriptive statistics for strategic planning are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Strategic Planning

Assertion	Mean	Std. Deviation
Strategic planning effectively promotes better service delivery	3.89	0.924
The strategic planning process effectively sets clear goals and objectives	3.94	0.931
There is regular stakeholder participation in strategic planning sessions	3.76	0.842
The Assembly's strategic goals are communicated effectively to all employees	3.82	0.876
The strategic planning process is reviewed and updated regularly	3.71	0.819
Aggregate Mean	3.82	0.878

Source: Field Data (2025)

As presented in Table 1, the statement that the strategic planning process effectively sets clear goals and objectives received the highest mean rating (Mean = 3.94; SD = 0.931), suggesting that the Assembly has established structured planning mechanisms that articulate organizational direction and intended outcomes. The respondents also strongly agreed that strategic planning has a great positive impact on the quality of service delivered (Mean = 3.89; SD = 0.924), indicating that the strategic planning process is considered a useful tool for making the Assembly more effective in its core functions.

The respondents generally agreed that the Assembly's strategic objectives were communicated clearly to all staff (Mean = 3.82; SD = 0.876). The actual communication of strategic goals is very important in ensuring that every member of the organization knows what part they play in attaining institutional goals (Kibet & Rotich, 2020). Regular involvement of different stakeholders in strategic planning sessions received moderate approval (Mean = 3.76; SD = 0.842), indicating room to make the process more inclusive. The statement that received the lowest rating concerned the regular review and update of strategic plans (Mean = 3.71; SD = 0.819), suggesting that reviews may not be as frequent or systematic as they should be.

Inferential Statistics Analysis

Inferential statistics analysis contains results of diagnostic tests and tests of hypothesis conducted to determine the effect of strategic planning on organizational performance in the Nyandarua County Assembly.

Correlation Analysis

Table 2 presents the Pearson correlation results between strategic planning and organizational performance.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix

Construct	Performance	Strategic Planning
Performance	1.000	
Strategic Planning	0.768**	1.000

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

Source: Field Data (2025)

As shown in Table 2, strategic planning uncovered the strongest link with performance ($r = 0.768$, $p < 0.01$), indicating a strong and statistically significant positive relationship. This means that improvements in strategic planning practices are associated with enhanced organizational performance outcomes in the Nyandarua County Assembly. The findings are consistent with those of Wambugu and Gichuki (2021), who reported a very strong positive relationship between strategic management methods and public sector organizational performance in Kenya.

Test of Hypothesis

The hypothesis sought to test the relationship between strategic planning and organizational performance. The null hypothesis was: 'Strategic planning has no significant influence on the performance of the Nyandarua County Assembly.' Table 3 presents the regression coefficients.

Table 3: Regression Coefficients

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	Sig.
(Constant)	0.674	0.265		0.013
Strategic Planning	0.328	0.082	0.341	0.000

Source: Field Data (2025)

The Beta coefficient of strategic planning is 0.341 ($B = 0.328$). This indicates that the relationship between strategic planning and organizational performance is positive and statistically significant. The coefficient implies that a unit increase in strategic planning would lead to a 0.341 standardized increase in organizational performance. The level of statistical significance for this variable is 0.000 ($p = 0.000$; $p < 0.05$). Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Findings from the test of hypothesis exhibit consistency with previous studies by Mwangi (2016), Waithaka and Gichure (2019), and Mwangi and Wainaina (2017), who found that formal strategic planning significantly influences the performance of public sector organizations. The results also align with those of Kiarie and Njoroge (2022), who reported that the adoption of formalized strategic planning procedures led to greater increases in legislative productivity and oversight effectiveness in Kenyan county assemblies.

Table 4 presents the model summary for the regression analysis.

Table 4: Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.843	0.711	0.701	0.487

Source: Field Data (2025)

The correlation coefficient ($R = 0.843$) indicates a strong positive association between strategic planning and organizational performance. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.711$) shows that the predictors, with strategic planning as the key variable, collectively explain 71.1% of the variation in performance. The Adjusted R^2 of 0.701 confirms that this level of explanation holds even after accounting for model complexity.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The results of the test of hypothesis revealed that strategic planning and organizational performance are strongly and positively related ($B = 0.328$; $Beta = 0.341$). The relationship was also found to be statistically significant ($p = 0.000$; $p < 0.05$), and the null hypothesis was therefore rejected. The descriptive analysis showed that the majority of respondents agreed that strategic planning effectively promotes better service delivery, sets clear goals and objectives, and enhances communication of institutional priorities. The aggregate mean score for strategic planning was 3.82, indicating a generally positive perception of the practice among staff and MCAs at the Nyandarua County Assembly.

Conclusions

The study concludes that strategic planning has a statistically significant and positive effect on the organizational performance of the Nyandarua County Assembly. County assemblies that adopt systematic strategic planning approaches, with clear goal-setting, broad stakeholder engagement, and regular plan reviews, demonstrate higher levels of legislative productivity, oversight effectiveness, and public service delivery. The Balanced Scorecard framework further confirms that strategic planning aligns institutional activities with constitutional mandates across dimensions of financial accountability, internal efficiency, stakeholder satisfaction, and institutional learning. These findings are consistent with the theoretical frameworks of Contingency Theory, Resource-Based Theory, and the Balanced Scorecard Model, all of which emphasize the importance of deliberate and context-responsive strategic planning for institutional performance.

Recommendations

The study recommended that the Nyandarua County Assembly should institutionalize a formal strategic planning cycle by establishing dedicated planning committees, conducting annual strategic reviews, and ensuring that stakeholders, including MCAs, administrative staff,

community representatives, and development partners, are actively involved in the development of plans. Strategic plans should be aligned with the County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs) and should set forth SMART objectives for legislative, oversight, and representation functions. The Assembly leadership should devise proper communication plans so that all staff, MCAs, and stakeholders are informed of the strategic goals through regular briefings, internal newsletters, and strategic plan summaries. Furthermore, the strategic planning process should be reviewed regularly to reflect changing legislative priorities, budgetary constraints, and evolving public expectations.

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