

**STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND PERFORMANCE OF UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA****¹Mohamed Zamzam, ²Prof. Karanja Ngugi ³Dr. Deya Jared**¹PhD Student, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology²Lecturer, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology³Lecturer, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology**ABSTRACT**

Universities in Kenya today are operating in a highly turbulent and dynamic environment as a result of liberalization of the higher education industry, resulting in an influx of many players. To deal with the changes and high levels of competition, it requires Kenyan universities to have effective strategic leadership practices to enhance performance for their universities, especially when Kenya integrates into the regional and global markets. The general objective of this study was to determine the relationship between strategic direction and performance of universities in Kenya. The study was based on positivist philosophy of science which sought to verify the propositions through empirical test by measuring the relationships between the dependent and independent variables. The study used descriptive research design. The target population for this study were all the 64 chartered universities in Kenya. A structured questionnaire was used for primary data collection. The questionnaire was pilot tested to determine its validity and reliability. The study used both primary data and secondary data. Primary data was gathered from top management, university councils and workers' representatives of the universities under study. Secondary data was collected from journals, books, internet searches and articles through secondary data collection sheet. Data collected was organized in spreadsheets for the purpose of analysis, it was coded and entered into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 29.0) for analysis. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation was used to analyze the data. Correlation and regression analysis was conducted to find the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Data was presented on tables and graphs. The pilot study comprised of ten percent (10%) of equivalent of study respondents amounting to 27 respondents. The overall Cronbach Alpha value for reliability was 0.858. The validity of the questionnaire was tested using construct validity. The study concludes that strategic direction is a crucial factor in establishing, motivating and rewarding achievement of general goals and specific objectives of the universities in Kenya. From the results, mission statement, vision statement and target/goal setting are essential aspects of strategic direction which affect the performance of the universities in Kenya. This study therefore recommends that the management of performance of universities should adopt strategic direction to help them set overall objective and make proper planning on how to achieve the set goals, evade disruption, organize business operations, solve diverse problem facing the organization by concentrating on the best possible solution and also maximize resources.

Key Words: Strategic Direction, Performance of Universities, Upper Echelon Leadership Theory

Background of the Study

Strategic direction shape the formation of strategic intent which influences successful strategic practices in an organization. According to Nel (2018), strategic leadership is a managerial capability of a firm expect, predict, keep flexibility, and endow others to generate strategic change and a feasible future of the firm. Harris (2018) indicated that strategic leaders understand the current state of available markets, how to structure their products to serve the market competitively, the health of their organization and the presence of capital, how to determine the needs of the different sections of an organization, how to manage change in various states, how to use accountability and power, and ways to develop an optimum leadership team with adequate skills and competencies. The purpose and vision of an organization bring into line the activities of all people in the firm (Harris, 2018). Strategic leadership practices also enable organizational leaders to influence their followers to contribute effectively to the accomplishment of the goals and objectives of the organization

Shao (2019) defines SL as a leader's ability to anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility, think strategically and work with followers to initiate changes that create a viable future for the organization. Golensky and Hager (2020) adds that SL is multi-functional and relates to managing others as well as organizations in managing the challenges of today's globalized business environment. Strategic leadership also requires expertise in managing both internal and external business (Norzailan, Othman & Ishizaki, 2018).

According to covin et al., (2016), a strategic leader possesses critical characteristics which include but not limited to future orientation, cognitive ability, ability to focus on the big picture, interpersonal relations, propensity to act and risk taking. Likewise, from empirical studies on strategic leadership practices, these practices are identified as involving determining Strategic Communication, exploring and maintaining unique core competencies, developing human capital, sustaining an effective External Environment, emphasizing ethical practices and establishing balanced strategic controls. Strategic

leadership is another important knowledge management enabler and plays a critical role in implementing knowledge management for three reasons: establishment of vision for the organization as well as developing an action plan for the implementation of that vision; identification of opportunities that generate knowledge; and championing and influencing cultural and organizational transformation since knowledge management involves modifying processes, practices, and organizational structures.

In today's world, strategic leadership has been adopted to a large extent by a variety of industries due to the cut throat competition experienced in most of the industries. This means the capability of an organization to tap information from the industry environment has remained necessary for obtaining a favorable competitive edge (Akhavan, Sanjaghi, Rezaeenoor, & Ojaghi, 2018). In the face of rapid globalization, competition, change in customer demands and technological growth has rendered the business environments difficult to predict and maintaining a competitive advantage has remained a hard task. Organizations have therefore been in efforts to enhance competitive advantage through exemplary performance (Mehralian, Nazari, Akhavan, & Rasekh, 2018).

In order to survive in the turbulent environment, strategic leadership is essential for ensuring that leaders adopt innovative ways of conducting business (Slawinski, 2018). Bansal & Desjardine, (2019) avers that dismal inclination towards strategic leadership may results to poor organization performance and sustainability.

Li (2019) argues that strategic direction is vital for provision of strategic ideas, problem solving as well as increase in organizational capacity. Provision of strategic ideas means that the managers views events in the future perspective rather than the current perspective. In other words, it implies that managers have a bigger picture of the organization for acquisition of resources to get to the horizon (Gavetti, 2018). The firm's capacity is improved by the ability to gather knowledge and using the information to make informed decisions for running the organization.

Statement of the Problem

In the prevailing vibrant global environment that organizations operate in today, organizations are faced with a huge responsibility of understanding and implementing strategic leadership in order to keep up with the ever-changing customer needs and changing financial lifestyles. According to Cabiddu and Pettinao (2018), organizations in different sectors can improve on their performance by paying far greater attention to the capabilities they need to successfully implement their strategy. Statistics show that, in the past one decade 57% of youthful population from developing countries pursue tertiary education outside their home countries (UNESCO, 2018). This implies that there is a high demand for quality tertiary education among the youth in developing countries especially in Kenya. According to Commission for University Education -CUE (2022) challenges such as low Internet access, high costs of maintaining and upgrading resources, lack of access to contemporary study material, vandalism and inadequate funding and staffing are major constraints to research quality in Kenyan institutions. In addition, some universities do not have clear vision and missions rendering them uncompetitive.

According to Rabai (2020), the expansion of university education has experienced a crisis – deteriorating quality and relevance, unsustainable financing, limited research, low staff morale and the struggle between regular and parallel degree programmes. The rapid expansion has also led to a rise in educational costs. Leadership challenges have led to crises in the universities including failure to meet the demand for high quality services and the implication is that academic standards have been compromised in pursuit of the financial survival of the institution. The recent focus by the government has been on increasing access for transitioning students to universities, but the infrastructural capacity of the institutions does not correspond with the growing number of students (CUE, 2022). These is worsened by the fact that there is lack of human capital development, lack of strategic control and bad communication strategies which culminate to lack of competitiveness.

Despite the deliberate move by the Government of Kenya to expand university education through the creation of more universities and expansion of programmes offered to get industrialized by the year 2030 in line with the Kenya Vision 2030, Kenyan universities continue to be ranked low internationally as only University of Nairobi, USIU and Strathmore University were ranked among top 50 out of 12,000 institutions in Africa in survey conducted by the Webometrics in 2022 and no Kenyan university was ranked among the top 1000 in a survey conducted by the Academic Ranking of World Universities in 2022. In 2022, only the University of Nairobi appeared in the top 50 ranking among the Universities in Africa as per the Webometrics survey in 2022. The survey suggests that universities' performance has become a point of concern to stakeholders following these low positions in ranking (Kaluyu, M'chebere, & Gichunge, 2023).

Various studies have been conducted on perceived strategic direction and organization performance. For instance; However, most of the empirical studies on the relationship of strategic direction and performance were done in developed countries with different cultural and economic settings. This study, therefore, sought to fill the gap in the literature by focusing on the relationship between perceived strategic direction and performance of universities in Kenya.

General Objective

The general objective of this study was to determine the influence of strategic direction on performance of universities in Kenya.

Theoretical Framework

Upper Echelon Leadership Theory

The origin of upper echelon theory is traced to the research of Hambrick and Mason in 1984. According to the proponents of this theory, leaders' personal characteristics are reflected in the decisions they take in organizations. This theory was founded on the premise that organizational outcomes were directly influenced by the knowledge, experience, and expertise of the strategic leaders (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). The knowledge, experience, and skills are essential

predictors of strategic leadership practice and organizational performance. Hambrick and Mason (1984) argued that organizations are a reflection of their strategic leaders. Above all, a number of scholars have proposed that strategic leaders play an instrumental role in realizing organizational performance (Henderson, Miller, & Hambrick, 2016).

The arguments on upper echelons theory strengthen the understanding of perceived strategic leadership practices and organizational performance. The main variables in upper echelon theory include age, the number of years, work experience, and educational background are useful in providing demographic background the leaders who are responsible for strategic practices in the organization. The strategic leaders' job demand stems from task challenges, performance challenges, and executive aspirations.

Hitt, Ireland, and Hoskisson (2019) related strategic leadership with Strategic Communication, and predicting environmental changes, while at the same time enabling self-growth, by being flexible, and others' growth by empowering them. Menz (2015) views strategic leaders as being critical organizational assets that engage in several strategic actions for the organization.

Conceptual Framework

According to Kombo & Tromp (2019), a concept is an abstract or general idea inferred or derived from specific instances. A conceptual framework is a set of broad ideas and principles taken from relevant fields of enquiry and used to structure a subsequent presentation. Mugenda and Mugenda (2016) and Smith (2004), define a conceptual framework a hypothesized model identifying the model under study and the relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

Kothari (2017) defines an independent variable also known as the explanatory variable as the presumed cause of the changes of the dependent variable, while a dependent variable refers to the variable which the researcher wishes to explain. The goal of a conceptual framework is to categorize and describe concepts relevant to the

study and map relationships among them. Such a framework would help researchers define the concept, map the research terrain or conceptual scope, systematize relations among concepts, and identify gaps in literature (Creswell, 2016).

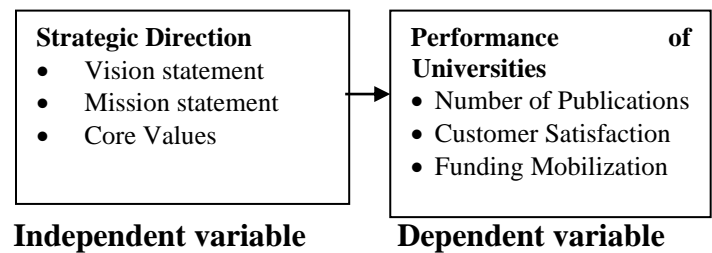


Figure 2. 1: Conceptual Framework

Strategic Direction

Strategic direction entails developing the vision, mission, core values, and objectives (Mutia, 2015). This entails creating a roadmap for the organizations future. The work of a strategic leader is to enable smooth development of a strategic plan. The leader tries to align the actions, beliefs, values of employees and management as well as stakeholders towards the organizational goal. An organization with direction enables strategic leaders to develop the criteria for guiding, engaging and leading processes and operations which enable organization to achieve its goals (Szpakowski, 2017). Strategic direction is important as it relates positively with the organizational performance. Also it has a significant effect on the performance of an organization (Odita & Bello, 2015).

According to Pearce and Robinson (2019) leaders play a bigger role is helping their company embrace change by setting forth their strategic intent, this creates a clear sense of where they want to lead the company to and what results they expect to achieve in the end. They do this by concentrating simultaneously and very clearly on two very different issues: vision and performance. Chapman (2019) says that the main objective in any organization is for everyone to understand the organization's strategy and specifically be aware of whatever they are doing, and this will contribute to overall delivery.

Empirical Literature Review

Strategic Direction and Performance

Henry (2017) did an Assessment of the Effectiveness of Strategic Leadership Practices on Organization Performance with focus on Dairy Factories in Denmark. The study sought to establish the influence of Strategic Direction on performance of these firms. The study employed descriptive research design. The target population of this study was 795 permanent employees in all these factories. Purposive and stratified random sampling was used. A sample size of 303 employees consisting of 261 employees, 6 managers and 36 supervisors was selected. The study established a significant positive relationship between determining Strategic Communication and performance. The findings indicate that Strategic Direction is directly and indirectly positively associated with performance. Babu and Chalam (2016) studied the impact of organizational Mission and Vision and their Potential on the Performance of Employees in Indian manufacturing firms. The study was qualitative in nature. Probit regression results showed that firms with a well formulated mission and vision statements performed better compared to those that did not.

Munyao, Chiroma and Ongeti (2020) focused on the effects of Strategic Direction on the performance of Africa Inland Church Theological Training Institutions in Ghana. Data was collected using both open and closed ended questionnaires from management members, employees and third year students of A.I.C theological training institutions in Ghana. The study established that Strategic Direction had a positive effect on the performance of the institutions with a strong correlation coefficient of 0.78. In Nigeria, Jonyo and Abo (2018) studied the effect of Mission and Vision on Organizational Performance within Private Universities. This was a correlational study which adopted a positivist philosophy. The study population comprised of all the 17 private universities unit of analysis was the board of directors, vice chancellors, heads of departments (finance, sports, human resource, research, quality assurance) and academic deans (business school) which was 136. The study found that, mission and vision explained a significant proportion of

variance in organizational performance. The study found that for every unit change in mission and vision, organizational performance increases by 0.867 hence implying a positive impact of mission and vision on organizational performance.

Kitonga (2016) conducted a research on the relationship between strategic leadership practices and organizational performance of not-for-profit organizations in Nairobi County in Kenya. One of the study objectives was to find out the influence of Strategic Direction on organizational performance. The research design applied in this study was the mixed methods research design which adopts both quantitative and qualitative information gathering procedures are used simultaneously. Study findings indicated that the Strategic Direction and organizational performance were moderately correlated.

In another study, Waithira, Waiganjo and Njeru (2016) sought to find out the Influence of Strategic Direction on Organizational Performance in Tourism Government Agencies in Kenya. The study adopted a cross sectional survey design using both quantitative and qualitative data. The data was collected from both management and non-management staff, to get an in depth understanding of the influence of Strategic Direction on performance of the organizations. The study found that Strategic Direction significantly influences the organizational performance of tourism agencies. The top managers and middle level managers over saw most functions relating to offering Strategic Direction to the organizations. The low level cadre of staff was less involved in the process of strategy formulation and were mostly involved in the implementation exercise.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Philosophy

The positivism philosophy was used in this study. This philosophy postulates that it is impossible to comprehend observations through measurements (Graton & Jones, 2010). This philosophy is flexible as it captures both the quantitative and qualitative research methods. It is also reliant on

multiple data collection methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Post-positivism approaches accept that the natural sciences do not provide the only model for social research. The approach does not hold on the absolute truth and certainty but relies heavily on confidence.

Research Design

This study adopted descriptive survey research design approach using quantitative and qualitative research designs. A quantitative research design was used to examine the relationship between variables with the primary goal being to analyze and represent that relationship mathematically through statistical analysis. Qualitative descriptive research design is used when the goal of the research problem is to examine a phenomenon with an in-depth understanding and description.

Study Population

The target population for this study was the 64 universities accredited to undertake university education in Kenya, distributed as follows: 27 public universities 18 chartered universities, 5 university constituent colleges and 14 institutions with letter of interim authority according to the Commission for University Education website (CUE, 2021). The survey unit of analysis composed of universities accredited to undertake university education in Kenya whose academic leaders were the units of inquiry. These universities were selected for the study since they are largely controlled by the same regulator (CUE) and are required to observe similar guidelines in their operations. Despite the differences in their funding models, both public and private universities in the Country have featured in global rankings owing to their extensive investments, quality of education and overall performance. As such, a study that incorporates both private and public universities is a modest attempt to understand the general performance of these institutions. The senior and middle managers are considered the most appropriate group to answer questions ranging from aspects of structure, strategy, and performance (Hung, 2016). Similar justification was also provided by Lok *et al.* (2018) in their study. In addition, Kaluyu *et al.*

(2019) maintained that the key managers run day to day managerial activities and thus have a better understanding of the status of the institutions.

Table 1: Study Population

Type of University	Population
Public universities	27
Chartered universities	18
University constituent colleges	5
Institutions with letter of interim authority	14
Total	64

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The researcher used Stratified sampling which is a type of probability sampling method in which sample members from a larger population are selected according to a random starting point but with a fixed, periodic interval (the sampling interval).

According to Cooper and Schindler (2019) a sample is subset of a population. In a descriptive survey a sample enables a researcher to gain information about a population (Kothari, 2014; Mugenda & Mugenda, 2018).The larger the sample, the more likely the scores on the variables were representative of the population scores. The sample size was determined using the formula suggested by Yamane (1967).

The formula is as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where, n= Sample size
N= Population size
e= Margin of error

Therefore, the sample size for the respondents was:

$$n = \frac{256}{1 + 256(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 156 \text{ respondents}$$

Therefore, a sample size of 156 respondents participated.

Table 2: Sample Size

Unit Of Observation	Population	Sample
University Management	64	39
Worker Union Representation (2 Representative ,Uasu – 1 and Kusu-- 1)	128	78
University Councils	64	39
Total	256	156

Data Collection Instruments

Both qualitative and quantitative data was collected through primary and secondary data. Primary data was required to gain deeper insight and a better interpretation of the quantitative data. This research used questionnaire (Lumpkin & Dess, 2019). The primary data is key to the current research as it provides information that address the research objectives. Annum (2014) states that a questionnaire is a form or document with a set of questions deliberately designed to elicit responses from respondents or research informants for the purpose of collecting data or information. Structured questionnaires are those in which some control or guidance is given for the answers. The questionnaire was administered by four trained research assistants to the university management. The method of data collection was through drop and pick method. On the other hand, secondary data on university performance was collected using a data collection sheet.

Pilot Study

Before a survey is carried out all aspects of the questionnaire as a survey instrument should undergo a pilot test (Yin, 2017). Pre-testing enables the researcher to modify and remove ambiguous items on instruments (Lune & Berg, 2016). A pilot test is conducted to detect weaknesses in design, instrumentation and to provide proxy data for selection of probability sample. Pilot test enables the researcher to identify and eliminate any problems that may exist in a questionnaire (Best & Kahn, 2016) and examine the reliability and validity for measures used in the questionnaire (Yin, 2017). A pilot study is conducted with 4% - 10% of the sample population (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The pilot

study was conducted among 16 respondents which is 10% of the sample size from the universities in Kenya. The aim was to test the reliability and validity of the questionnaire.

Data Processing and Analysis

Data analysis involves reducing accumulated data to a manageable size, developing summaries, looking for patterns and applying statistical techniques to help the researcher interpret the findings in relation to the research questions (Cooper & Schindler, 2011). In this study, quantitative data was coded and analyzed, while content coding was used in coding the qualitative data. Statistical techniques such as measures of central tendency, dispersion, symmetry and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. In descriptive analysis, the raw data of the indicators was analyzed and presented in frequency tables and graphs for all the variables depending on the nature of the categorical data of the indicator. The mode in terms of the modal class was used as a measure of central tendency of choice because the indicators were ordinal categorical data with 5 categories each.

Regression Modelling

To draw conclusions on the objectives of the study and test hypotheses, statistical models were fitted for the specification function showing the relationship between strategic direction and Performance of Universities in Kenya. Bivariate regression models were fitted to determine the relationship between each independent variable and Performance of Universities in Kenya. Bivariate models consider the relationship between two variables at a time without considering the combined joint relationships. The study used two types of linear regression analyses; linear multiple regression and hierarchical linear regression. Linear regression was used to test relationship between variables due to linear relationship between the variables. The regression model was used for quantitative procedures examining the relationship between independent and dependent variables;

RESEARCH FINDINGS ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics of the Study Variables

Descriptive analysis seeks to describe the findings as observed during the analysis. Holcomb (2016) observed that descriptive statistics are important because they enable presentation of data in a meaningful way, and consequently allow for a simpler interpretation and allow patterns to emerge from the data. This view is also shared by Cooper and Schindler (2018), Kothari (2018) and Sekaran (2016). Two measures of central tendency, the mean and standard deviation, were used in interpreting the research results while the percentages (%) were used to indicate the frequency of each Likert’s score under each item.

Table 3: Strategic Direction

Statements	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %	Mean	Std. Dev.
Our university has a clearly communicated mission statement.	17.70	16.10	23.30	23.30	19.70	3.11	1.37
Our university has a clearly communicated vision statement	18.40	21.30	21.30	19.30	19.70	3.01	1.39
The vision statement clearly shows the current and future position of the university	22.30	20.70	19.30	19.00	18.70	2.91	1.43
The university has value statements governing its operations and its relationship with both internal and external stakeholder	7.50	13.80	9.20	32.50	37.00	3.78	1.28
The university has developed strategies through which the mission objectives was achieved.	12.10%	10.80	7.90	31.10	38.00	3.72	1.38
The university has action plans that include: what is to be done, when to be done and who is accountable each of actions being carried out	5.90	9.80	7.20	36.40	40.70	3.96	1.19
Aggregate Score						3.56	1.32

The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which Our University has a clearly communicated mission statement. The findings from the study revealed that seventeen point seven percent (17.7%) indicated they strongly disagreed with the statement, sixteen point one percent (16.1%) disagreed with the statement, and twenty-three point three percent (23.30%) moderately agreed and agreed respectively while the remaining nineteen point seven percent (19.70%) agreed to the statement. On a five-point scale, the average mean of the responses was 3.56 which implies that majority of the respondents agreed on the statement; however, the answers were varied as shown by the standard deviation of 1.32

The respondents were asked to indicate that our university has a clearly communicated vision

Kothari and Garg (2019) contend that the mean is most common measure of central tendency while standard deviation is the most widely used and regarded a very satisfactory in re measure of dispersion in research studies. The results have been captured systematically based on the specific objectives of the study.

Strategic Directions and Performance of Universities

The first objective of the study sought to assess how Strategic Directions affects performance of universities in Kenya. Six research questions were posed to the respondents. Table 4.1 presents the descriptive statistics results generated for public participation

statement. The findings from the study showed that eighteen point four percent (18.40%) indicated they strongly disagreed with the statement, twenty-one point three percent (21.30%) disagreed and moderately agreed respectively with the statement, nineteen point three percent (19.30%) agreed with the statement while the remaining nineteen point seven percent (19.70%) strongly agreed with the statement. On a five-point scale, the average mean of the responses was 3.01 which implies that majority of the respondents agreed on the statement; however, the answers were varied as shown by the standard deviation of 1.39.

The respondents were asked to indicate whether the vision statement clearly shows the current and future position of the university. The findings

from the study showed that twenty-two point three (22.30%) indicated they strongly disagreed with the statement, twenty point seven percent (20.70%) disagreed with the statement, nineteen point three percent (19.30%) moderately agreed with the statement, nineteen percent (19.00%) agreed with the statement while the remaining eighteen point seven percent (18.70%) strongly agreed with the statement. On a five-point scale, the average mean of the responses was 2.91 which implies that majority of the respondents agreed on the statement; however, the answers were varied as shown by the standard deviation of 1.43.

The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which the university has value statements governing its operations and its relationship with both internal and external stakeholder. The findings from the study showed that seven point five percent (7.50%) indicated they strongly disagreed with the statement, thirteen point eight percent (13.80%) disagreed with the statement, nine point two percent (9.20%) moderately agreed with the statement, thirty-two point five percent (32.50%) agreed with the statement while the remaining thirty-seven percent (37.00%) strongly agreed with the statement. On a five-point scale, the average mean of the responses was 3.78 which implies that majority of the respondents agreed on the statement; however, the answers were varied as shown by the standard deviation of 1.28.

The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which the university has developed strategies through which the mission objectives were achieved. The findings from the study showed that nine point two percent (9.20%) indicated they strongly disagreed with the statement, eleven point eight percent (11.80%) disagreed with the statement, seven point nine percent (7.90%) moderately agreed with the statement, thirty one point five percent (31.50%) agreed with the statement while the remaining thirty nine point seven percent (39.70%) strongly agreed with the statement that The university has developed strategies through which the mission objectives was achieved . On a five-point scale, the average mean of the responses was 3.81 which implies that majority of the respondents agreed on the

statement; however, the answers were varied as shown by the standard deviation of 1.32.

The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which the university has action plans that include: what is to be done, when to be done and who is accountable each of actions being carried out. The findings from the study showed that seven point two percent (7.20%) indicated they strongly disagreed with the statement, nine point eight percent (9.80%) disagreed with the statement, eight point five percent (8.50%) moderately agreed with the statement, thirty-four point four percent (34.40%) agreed with the statement while the remaining forty percent (40.00%) strongly agreed with the statement. On a five-point scale, the average mean of the responses was 3.9 which implies that majority of the respondents agreed on the statement; however, the answers were varied as shown by the standard deviation of 1.23. These insights imply that the universities have embraced strategic direction as a strategic leadership approach in executing their operations which has affected their performance to a great magnitude. This concurs with Aziz and Rahman (2019) who reported that strategic direction has a good statistically significant impact on financial, customer, learning and growth of organizations.

Test for Hypothesis One

The first specific objective of the study was to determine the influence of strategic direction on performance of universities in Kenya. The associated null hypothesis was that strategic direction does not significantly influence performance of universities in Kenya. A univariate analysis was conducted in which performance of universities in Kenya was regressed on strategic direction.

The R-Squared depicted the variation in the dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variables. The greater the value of R-squared the greater the effect of independent variable. The R Squared can range from 0.000 to 1.000, with 1.000 showing a perfect fit that indicates that each point is on the line. As indicated in Table 4.2, the R-squared for the relationship between strategic direction and

performance of universities in Kenya was 0.241; this is an indication that at 95% confidence interval, 24.1% of variation in performance of universities in Kenya can be attributed to changes in strategic direction. Therefore, strategic direction can be used to explain 24.1% of changes in performance of universities in Kenya but there are other factors that can be attributed to 75.9% change in performance of universities in Kenya.

Table 1: Model Summary for Strategic Direction

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.491 ^a	.241	.239	.69655

a. Predictors: (Constant), Strategic Direction

The analysis of variance was used to determine whether the regression model is a good fit for the data. It also gave the F-test statistic; the linear regression's F-test has the null hypothesis that there is no linear relationship between the two variables. From the analysis of variance (ANOVA) findings in Table 4.3, the study found out that that $Prob > F_{1,127} = 0.000$ was less than the selected 0.05 level of significance. This suggests that the model as constituted was fit to predict performance of universities in Kenya. Further, the F-calculated, from the table (235.23) was greater than the F-critical, from f-distribution tables (3.916) supporting the findings that strategic direction can be used to predict performance of universities in Kenya.

Table 2: ANOVA for Strategic Direction

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	45.87	1	45.87	235.23	.000 ^b
1 Residual	24.735	127	0.195		
Total	70.605	128			

a. Dependent Variable: performance of universities in Kenya

b. Predictors: (Constant), Strategic Direction

From the results in Table 4 the following regression model was fitted.

$$Y = 2.069 + 0.433 X_1$$

(X_1 is Strategic Direction)

The coefficient results showed that the constant had a coefficient of 2.069 suggesting that if

Strategic Direction was held constant at zero, performance of universities in Kenya would be 2.069 units. In addition, results showed that strategic direction coefficient was 0.433 indicating that a unit increase in strategic direction would result in a 0.433 improvement in performance of universities in Kenya. It was also noted that the P-value for strategic direction coefficient was 0.000 which is less than the set 0.05 significance level indicating that strategic direction was significant. Based on these results, the study rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternative that strategic direction has positive significant influence on performance of universities in Kenya.

Table 3: Beta Coefficients for Strategic Direction

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	2.069	.174		11.881	.000
1strategic direction	.433	.045	.491	9.723	.000

a. Dependent Variable: performance of universities in Kenya

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

The study found that strategic directions has a positive and significant influence on Performance of the Universities in Kenya. From the results, majority of the respondents agreed that their universities have clearly communicated mission and vision statements as shown by overall mean scores of 3.56 and 3.01 respectively. However, most of the responses showed neutrality on that the vision statements clearly show the current and future position of the universities as shown by an overall mean score of 2.91. There was agreement on that the universities do not have value statements governing their operations and their relationship with both internal and external stakeholders as shown by an overall mean score of 3.78. The respondents agreed that the universities have developed strategies through which the mission objectives were achieved as shown by an overall mean score of 3.81. There was affirmation on that the universities have action plans that

include: what is to be done, when to be done and who is accountable each of actions being carried out as shown by an overall mean score of 3.9.

From the correlation analysis, there is a positive significant relationship between performance of universities in Kenya and strategic directions as shown by Pearson's correlation coefficient of 0.653, p-value <0.001 which implies that 65.3% of performance of universities in Kenya is explained by strategic directions. Strategic Directions was found to be satisfactory in contribution as a factor to Performance of universities in Kenya. This was supported by coefficient of determination i.e. the R square of 39.2%. This shows that Strategic Directions explains 39.2% of Performance of universities in Kenya. The results meant that the model applied to link the relationship. This also implies that 60.8% of the variation in the dependent variable is attributed to other variables not captured in the model. Strategic directions and performance of universities in Kenya are positively and significantly related ($\beta = 0.558$, $p=0.000$). This implies that a unit increase in strategic directions would lead to increase in performance of universities in Kenya by 0.558.

These results imply that strategic direction aspects' such as mission statement, vision statement and target/goal setting inspire strategic actions, customer service, learning and growth, helps staff to keep focused and work together. In addition, the vision and mission statement inspire people to commit, to persist, help generate ideas, and other resources. In the same vein, Aziz and Rahman (2019) found that strategic direction has a good statistically significant impact on financial, customer, learning and growth of organizations. In addition, these findings are concurrent with Kong,

Basit and Zubair (2018) who established that the main components of strategic direction include leadership vision, core competencies, people development, and innovation capability.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that strategic direction is a crucial factor in establishing, motivating and rewarding achievement of general goals and specific objectives of the universities in Kenya. From the results, mission statement, vision statement and target/goal setting are essential aspects of strategic direction which affect the performance of the universities in Kenya. There is enough evidence that clear visions, employees support, visionary leadership, leadership directions and clear missions contribute greatly to the realization of organizational targets of the universities in Kenya. This means that improving strategic direction improves the performance of the universities in Kenya. Strategic leadership plays a great role is helping organizations embrace change by setting forth strategic intent which creates a clear sense of the direction that the organization should take and the results to be achieved in the end.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study found that strategic direction has a positive and significant effect on the performance of universities in Kenya. This study therefore recommends that the management of performance of universities should adopt strategic direction to help them set overall objective and make proper planning on how to achieve the set goals, evade disruption, organize business operations, solve diverse problem facing the organization by concentrating on the best possible solution and also maximize resources

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