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Influence of strategic management practices on organizational performance of humanitarian non-governmental organizations in Kenya: Case of refugee consortium of Kenya

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Abstract

The study sought to analyze the influence of strategy formulation, performance evaluation, strategy implementation, and stakeholder engagement on the organizational performance of Refugee Consortium of Kenya. The study was grounded on resource based view theory, behavioral theory of the firm and stakeholder theory. The study adopted descriptive design to demystify the effect of strategic management practices on sustainable performance. The study target population comprised 48 management employees from Refugee Consortium. Census approach used to select the sample population. Structured questionnaires were used to gather primary data from the respondents upon which final data analysis was performed. Findings revealed that strategy formulation, performance evaluation, strategy implementation and stakeholder engagement all had positive significant influence on the organizational performance of Refugee Consortium. Recommendation for robust measures to be undertaken to provide leeway of incorporating organization concerns during strategy formulation in the organization not only in RCK. On performance evaluation, the study recommended for incorporation of strategic control measures, performance monitoring tools and key KPIs to enable them address issues that may hinder them from aligning themselves to their strategic purpose.

Keywords: strategic plan, stakeholder engagement, strategic formulation, organizational performance, performance evaluation

Introduction

The performance of organizations rests on their adoption of strategic management practices. Organizations that engage in effective strategic management practices are able to sustain their operations and engage their stakeholders while operating in changing contexts. Wagner (2006) asserts that the imperativeness of strategic management practices can be viewed from four areas which are as follows: scan of the contextual environment, development of the strategy, and linkage of strategic objectives and goals to the organizations available and projected budgets and strategic plans. An analysis of the linkage between strategic management practices and performance of organizations is necessary to enhance understanding on strategy application in practice and to improve organizational performance. According to Grant (2006), strategy initiatives and directions, such as mission and vision statements, cost-saving goals, and debt-to-equity ratio targets, are put up by an organization's management to provide a framework of constraints and objectives that bind and direct strategic choices.

Strategic management practices have been incorporated by business organizations, as well as public and private sectors, as a crucial element for effective organizational performance. Steiner (2009) alludes that strategic management provides a framework for developing and putting into effect strategies. However, it is asserted that a supportive organizational environment and culture are necessary for strategic management practices to produce outcomes. According to Mat and Ansoff (2011), the environment in which the business operates keeps changing, thus it is essential to continuously adapt better actions if businesses want to succeed. Organizations therefore, need strategies to address the new concerns and the customers' changing needs in order to continue operations in an evolving environment. According to Thompson and Strickland (2016), effective performance depends on energizing organizational-wide commitment to the selected strategic practices.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are effective in mobilization and bringing change to communities through various sectors. These include but are not limited to socio economic, health and legal among others. NGOs mainly rely on donor funding to run their projects. Most donors prefer to analyze NGOs strategic management practices so as to have an idea of the type of NGO they are liaising with, and whether their work, organizational systems and culture, match with the donor's interests. In many instances, therefore, NGOs develop strategic management practices with the main intention of attracting donor funding with minimal consideration on whether the strategies engaged have an overall impact on the organizational performance.

The changing global environment with shrinkage of funds and corporates also delving into NGO work through corporate social responsibility initiatives denotes that NGOs need to have clear strategic management practices whose main intention is to influence organizational sustainability. Strategic management practices are effective mechanisms that ensures that NGOs refocus their strategies to optimize on organizational performance, organizational sustainability and achieve their missions. In this study, the Refugee Consortium of Kenya (RCK), a humanitarian NGO, is used as a case study to evaluate the influence of strategic management practices on organizational performance.

The interrelation between strategic management practices and organizational performance of humanitarian non-governmental organizations have been trailed in varied situations and backgrounds by scholars globally. For example, a study conducted in Indonesia by Muhsain, Mandere and Onyango (2020) indicated that strategic management practices were vital in enhancing and influencing the direction of the organization which in turn affected the organization's performance. Moreover, Singh, Kebangsaan and Ziza and Senix, (2021) observed from their study on the strategic management practices and performance of cooperatives in Malaysia, that conception of strategies, execution, monitoring and control affected performance of cooperatives.

Regionally, Mohammed (2021) studied the consequences of practices in strategic management on the performance of organizations, specifically, NGOs operating in Mogadishu, Somalia. The study appraised the effect of formulation of strategies, implementation of strategies and evaluation of strategies on the performance of organizations and found that such strategies, contributed substantively to the performance of organizations in Mogadishu Somalia telecom enterprises. The conclusion of the study was that the

management team of NGOs' must utilize strategic management approaches to boost their performance.

Locally, Kituma (2022) reviewed the influence of strategic management practices on funds allocation among NGOs in Nairobi County. The study observed that survival of NGOs was greatly influenced by key elements of strategic management practices adopted by the organizations which involved scanning of the environment, formulation of the strategy, implementation and monitoring. These were found to influence how limited resources in NGOs were allocated among various departments. The need for strategic management practices when allocating the limited funds received by NGOs, as well as an increased demand from donors for accountability of NGOs' resources, led to the redesign of NGO program implementation strategies to include cost recovery constituents, in which program beneficiaries also contribute to the program costs.

Mosley, Maronick, and Katz (2012) contend that strategic management practices aids NGOs in resolving problems related to funding insecurity. According to Aboramadan and Borgonovi (2016), strategic management practices promote the growth of relationships, which enables organizations to uphold long-lasting ties with contributors. NGOs base their strategic strategies on the achievement of their objectives and performance measurement. The creation of their mission statements, strategic objectives, strategic and outputs, vision statements and performance indicators is another area of emphasis.

Due to time and resource constraints, the majority of NGOs are unable to implement formal strategic management processes (Ghoneim, 2012). The role of strategic management practices has been explored in various contexts by NGOs, for instance Borgonovi (2016) looked at scanning of the environment, formulation of strategies, strategy implementation and M&E on financial performance. Similarly, Waweru and Omwenga (2015) and Thomas and Joyce (2017) studied the same strategic management practices on private construction firms and state corporations respectively. The current adopts strategy formulation, communication, implementation and performance evaluation strategies to examine the sustainability of humanitarian NGOs in Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

Strategic management practices are critical in determining the organization's direction, use of resources, and examining the environment within which the organization operates (Muthusi, 2014). Though NGOs have crafted strategic plans to satisfy the needs of their donors and key stakeholders, majority of organizations still experience a higher failure rate because they lack defined planning and working methods that could direct them toward the achievement of their objectives (Maina, 2019). Unfortunately, this is made worse by lack of/ minimal involvement of key stakeholders who are critical in the planning process, leading to lack of ownership in the development/formulation and implementation of strategic management practices (Odhiambo & Njuguna, 2021). Moreover, many Kenyan NGOs have to deal with managerial complications.

In addition, NGOs struggle to manage external relationships with their donors, government agencies and target groups (Mutole, 2019). There is also a growing desire from funders and other stakeholders for efficiency in project management as well as responsibility and transparency, which many NGOs lack. Their capacity to achieve their objectives is also being impacted by new challenges that stem from competition and cultural diversity (Mutole, 2019). Okwany and Auma (2015) further alluded that many humanitarian NGOs in Kenya have multipronged dimensions to address humanitarian needs of vulnerable groups, but many of these interventions are viewed as nothing better than charitable alternatives of care that rely on donors, with limited outreach to communities and suffer overlap, duplication and lack of coordination among the organizations serving similar communities.

This is further aggravated by the dependence on foreign aid which is linked to lack of community accountability and their inability to participate in the community (Hulme & Edwards, 1997). Community responsiveness and resilience and the NGO capacity to sustain their programmes with little or no donor support compounds the problem (Gall & Khuram, 2022). The numerous obstacles that NGOs face worldwide make it necessary for organizations to anticipate such concerns, identify their capabilities to combat them, and take control of the available resources for strategic planning towards successful performance (Asewe, 2022).

Several empirical studies on strategic management practices have been conducted. For instance, Langat and Auka (2016) exclusively examined how strategic management practices affected the success of SMEs in Nakuru County. Similar study was conducted by Kariuki, Maiyo and Ndiku, (2016) on how strategic planning practices affect public secondary school performance in Machakos County. This study's primary focus was on the relationship between school performance and strategy. Additionally, Abdi et al., (2020) and Rahman (2019) based their studies in the banking sector, Gumel (2019); Otieno et al., (2018) on SMEs and Midiwo and Ombui (2019) focused on ICT firms. All together, these studies fail to provide a formidable foundation of comparison for Non-Governmental organizations. Consequently, these studies also leave contextual gap that calls for more research on a contextual focus on NGO sector. Whereas a strong linkage is inferred amid strategic management and performance in many studies, its continuous failure, particularly in implementation, is a reflection of how complex it is and how many different aspects it depends on.

The Refugee Consortium of Kenya was identified for this study as it is one of the few national NGOs in the refugee sector in Kenya that has survived and continued to provide its services to its stakeholders since 1998. Nevertheless, an internal Human Resource report indicated a relatively high staff turnover in the past two years with 40% of the staff having left for other organizations and private firms. In addition, various donors and other stakeholders have engaged and disengaged from the organization over time. Furthermore, the organization has developed strategies over the years which would be of interest to know how this was done and the impact on the organizational performance. It would also, be of interest to understand further, the various strategic management practices that have been engaged by the governance system in the organization. This would be a great lesson for others in the sector to evaluate how they can build on the strengths of the organization but also, for the Refugee Consortium of Kenya to evaluate and instill from the recommendations in this study, strategic management approaches that may require to be enhanced.

Therefore, this study sought to determine the connection between strategic management practices and the performance of Refugee Consortium of Kenya (RCK).

Purpose of the study

This study aimed at determining the influence of strategic management practices on organizational performance of the Refugee Consortium of Kenya.

Specific objective: To establish the influence of strategy formulation on organizational performance of Refugee Consortium of Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

Resource Based View

Resource Based View theory (RBV) explores the relationships that exist between resources, competition, and profitability (Barney, 1991). This includes an analysis of competitive imitation while placing resources as superior or as the main influencer of a firm's performance. RBV emerged in 1980s and 1990s as popularized by its proponents; Wernerfelt, Prahalad and Hamel and Barney (1991). The supporters of this view contend that organizations should use the company's resources to increase their industrious edge as opposed to sourcing for an environment that can make them industrious (Wernerfelt, 1984). According to RBV's supporters, it is feasible to take advantage of an opportunity by utilizing current resources in an innovative manner (Rothaermel, 2012). In the model, resources majorly enable companies to perform at their optimum.

In recent years, RBV theory has developed to offer a means of comprehending how strategic resources and skills enable organizations to experience increased performance (Foss, 2015). In strategy, resources are viewed as enablers of capabilities that can result in superior performance over time. In strategic planning, capabilities are required to package, manage and exploit resources in a way that will enable customers have added advantage while creating competitive advantage for the organization (Hassam, 2014). However, the indications of RBV theory on strategic management are unclear since varied contributors fail to have

a common framework. Additionally, minimal work has been done to grow the theory's application in the real world. This study will make use of this theory to demonstrate how strategic management affects an organization's performance.

Empirical Review

Strategic formulation is a technique that considers the vision, mission, strategic objectives of an organisation, which are aimed at meeting the organizational goals (Barnat, 2014; The Saylor Foundation, 2017). According to Hidayat (2016), developing a strategy entails the interaction of several interconnected elements that help firms compete successfully and thrive in the fast-paced business world. This also includes functional/operational strategies, grand strategy, annual objectives, and generic strategy to the category of strategic components. Tapera (2016) also affirms that organizations should aim at adjusting their goals and strategies for a thriving and long lasting business market edge.

Several studies done on strategy formulation points a clear picture of what affects organizational performance in various sectors. For instance, Njagi et.al. (2015) in their analysis of factors that influence formulation of strategic plans in Embu Kenya, indicated that various challenges arise during implementation of the strategy which may not have been overlooked during formulation. These include lack of stakeholders appreciating the amount of time and dedication it will take to implement the strategy, poor communication across the board and employees or other stakeholders being opposed to the varied modifications brought about by the strategy. They however acknowledged that the challenges require a congruence between strategy and organizations' architecture and also infer that the reflections on the challenge that appears ahead of the other is inconsequential as long as there is compatibility in the operational environs.

Okwemba and Njuguna (2021) analysed the performance of Chemelil sugar company in Kisumu County based on the effect of the company's strategy formulation. The study was grounded on the fact that the company's performance was not in tandem with the envisaged company's strategic development plans. The study used descriptive design and targeted top management employees for data. Findings from the correlation analysis, exposed that the strategic plan and performance are statistically significantly affiliated. The regression analysis revealed a significant and favorable relationship between strategy design and performance ($r = .689$, $t = .774$, $p = .046$). The study recommended that companies should use the information at hand to document the intended course and the doable steps to accomplish its objectives.

Odhiambo (2023) did a study on the performance of savings and co-operative societies based on the formulation of their strategies and performance. The focus was on societies in Nairobi. More precisely, the study looked at how deposit taking savings and credit cooperative organizations performed in relation to strategies and in particular, development, execution, and strategy evaluation. The Modern Portfolio Theory, Resource Based Theory and Balanced Scorecard Theories served as the study's theoretical pillars. Regression analysis, results showed that all three aspects of strategy i.e. strategic planning, execution, and evaluation have positive and significant relationships and had substantial impact on the success of the SACCOs under consideration. According to the study, senior managers employed by SACCOs that focus on deposits should use the societies' mission and approaches to create effective strategies.

Sosiawani et.al., (2015) in their review of the role of strategic planning on firm performance opined that companies normally begin from vision statements and from this, they develop the company's objectives which in turn encourage employees and stakeholders to understand the company better. They further defined a vision statement as an explanation of the future image of the company, of what it will look like or aim to have achieved. This supports the organization and the managers in particular, to plan for the intended future while taking into consideration, all other current and predicted changes to the company. It must also consider the aspirations of the stakeholders to the company as they will be the company's greatest supporters and support its organizational performance.

Conceptual Framework

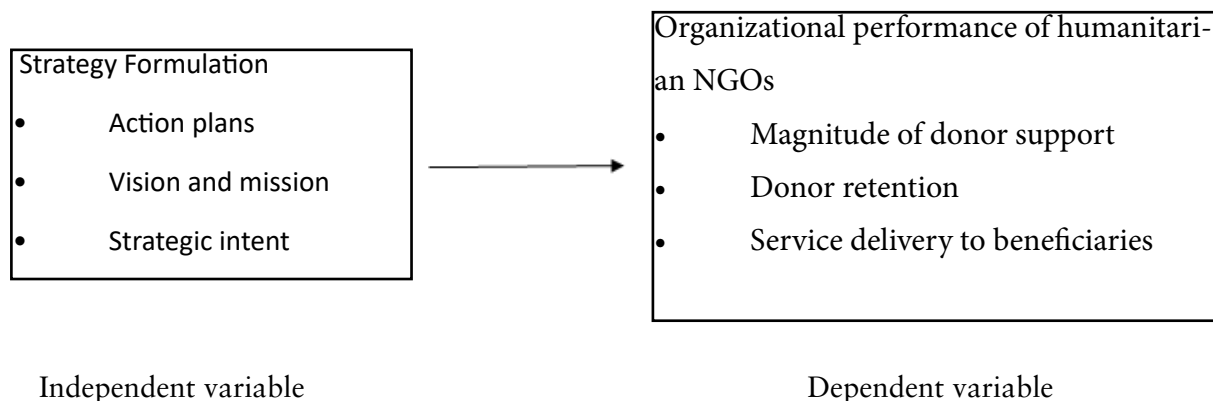


Fig 1: Conceptual framework

METHODOLOGY

The study used a quantitative and open ended approach as the methodology with a target population of 45 employees from Refugee Consortium of Kenya headquarters in Nairobi. Since the target population was small, the researcher opted to use a Census approach that enabled the inclusion of all the members of the target population into the study. Kothari (2004) argues that census approach is suited for investigations where the respondents are well-known, few, and accessible. Moreover, Wilson (2014) asserts that a census approach provides a pathway for examining groups as it ensures involvement of all members. Since a census technique is applied, the study rules out application of sampling design and technique. Data analysis entailed both qualitative and quantitative analysis. Qualitative data was subjected to qualitative analysis through content analysis and conveyed in narrative form. Whereas quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive analysis with that aid of SPSS software version 23, to derive the patterns of distribution through the frequencies, mean scores, percentages and standard deviation. Analyzed data were then being presented in APA tables, charts, and graphs.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Descriptive Analysis

The study examined the influence of strategy formulation on organizational performance of RCK. The respondents were required to give their opinions on a likert scale of 1 to 5, where 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3= neutral, 4=agree and 5=strongly agree. The first question on this objective asked respondents whether RCK had a strategy in place to steer its performance of delivering humanitarian services to the refugees in Kenya. Respondents gave varied answers as presented in Figure 2 below;

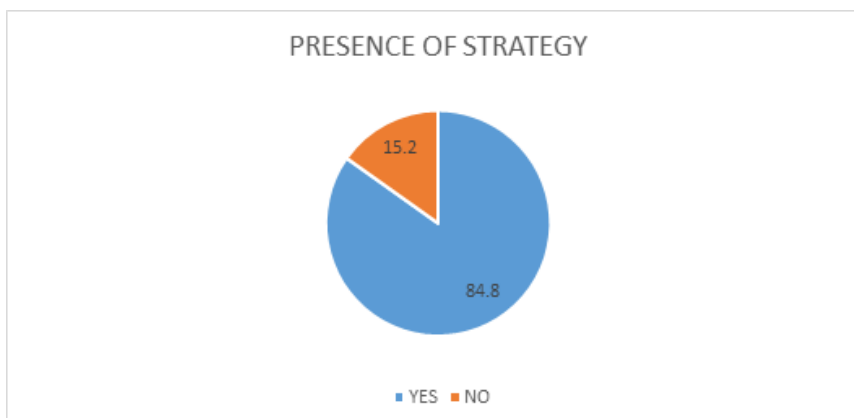


Figure 2: Does your organization have a strategy?

Findings obtained showed that majority of the respondents agreed that RCK formulated strategies as reflected by 84.8% whereas others gave a contrary view (15.2%).

The respondents further elaborated on how this was achieved within the organization by giving the following responses:

Some respondents opined that senior management took a lead role in the development and formulation of strategies for RCK and then shared with the other employees for their input, whereas some said that all the employees took part in the process.

However, some respondents were not sure though cited that management held workshops where the organization strategy was presented to them with a view of obtaining their feedback on the same. The study also noted that some respondents opined that all employees, stakeholders and key partners were involved in the formulation of RCK strategies, with a view of reviewing the contribution of the organization and charting a way forward for the next 5 years.

However, a number of respondents also gave a contrary view citing that RCK engaged a consultant and guided them on what they required to steer the organization forward. The organization also engaged staff members and other stakeholders from whom they needed their input. In conclusion, the study observed that strategy formulation at RCK was not elaborate and opens to many employees as reflected from their varied and contrary responses. Hence the need to integrate all the stakeholders in the process by incorporating their views

The last question sought respondents’ opinion on their level of agreement on the statements regarding strategy formulation at RCK. The findings were presented as under in Table 1;

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Strategy Formulation				
Statement	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
We have an elaborate laid out action plans that guide our strategy formulation process	46	196.00	4.2609	.92939
Managers are actively involved in creating vision and mission of the organization	46	200.00	4.3478	.73688
Managers are actively involved in making major decisions that affect our organization’s operations during strategy formulation	46	201.00	4.3696	.71051
Our organization employs PESTEL analysis in understanding factors that affect our external operations	46	192.00	4.1739	.76896
The organization incorporates environmental concerns while making strategic decisions, evaluating strategic development alternatives and issuing guiding principles	46	209.00	4.5435	.65681
The strategic intent of our organization is the guiding principle to achievement of our mission statement and vision	46	202.00	4.3913	.88137
Strategic decisions of our organization are based on the prevailing operational environment	46	193.00	4.1957	.80608
Valid N (listwise)	46			

Findings in Table 1 above, indicate that the respondents agreed that RCK have an elaborate laid out action plans that guide their strategy formulation process with a mean score of 4.2609 and a standard deviation of 0.92939. The respondents further acknowledged that managers were actively involved in creating vision and mission of the organization as shown with a mean rating of 4.3478 and standard deviation = 0.73688.

Moreover, the study found that managers were actively involved in making major decisions that affect our organization's operations during strategy formulation as indicated by a mean of 4.33696 with a standard deviation of 0.71051. The respondents further agreed that RCK employs PESTEL analysis to understand factors that affect their external operations as shown by a mean rating of 4.1739 and standard deviation of 0.76896.

Furthermore, the study found that RCK assimilates environmental concerns while developing strategic decisions, and when evaluating alternatives to strategic development and issuing guiding principles during strategy formulation process as indicated by a mean score of 4.5435 and standard deviation of 0.65681.

Consequently, the study found that respondents agreed that strategic intent of the organization was the guiding principle to the overall achievement of RCK mission statement and vision (mean=4.3913 and standard deviation =0.88137). Finally, the study observed that respondents agreed that strategic decisions of their organization were based on the prevailing operational environment as shown by a mean of 4.1957 and standard deviation of 0.80608. In conclusion, the study noted consistencies with previous researches by Anyieni and Areri (2016) that there was evidence of high level of significance between leadership styles and success of the strategic planning process. They also found that communication determines strategic planning, though not greatly.

The last question sought respondents' opinion on whether the organization had realized its strategic purpose. The respondents answered this question with varied responses being noted as reflected from the Figure 2 below;



Figure 2: Achievement of strategic purpose

The findings showed that there were varied results on the achievement of strategic purpose of RCK. While some respondents agreed, some disagreed in equal proportion. Some were of the opinion that RCK had established itself in the humanitarian sector as a key actor providing services set out in their strategic plan. While others noted that RCK had achieved its mandate as purposed in their vision, taking into consideration all aspects of both internal and external environments to ensure alignment with RCK mission statement. Moreover, the study further observed that respondents concurred that RCK had achieved its target in the community by providing humanitarian support to refugees and equally was moving in the right direction with its vision.

Inferential Analysis

Model Summary

The model summary in table 4.10 below shows that the model was of good fit with an R-square value of 0.423, meaning the independent variables; strategy formulation, performance evaluation, strategy implementation

and stakeholder engagement explained 52.3% of the variation in organizational performance of RCK. While the remaining percentage (47.7%) could be as a result of factors not covered in this study.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.650 ^a	.523	.437	3.87708	.737

a. Predictors: (Constant), SEN, SIM, SF, PEV
 b. Dependent Variable: OPF

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

The ANOVA test was used to test the model significance. For this study, the significance of the model was tested at 95% confidence level, with a p-value of less than 0.05, indicating a statistical significance. The summarized results were presented in Table 3 below;

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	86.155	4	21.539	31.433	.000 ^b
	Residual	616.301	41	15.032		
	Total	702.457	45			

a. Dependent Variable: OPF
 b. Predictors: (Constant), SEN, SIM, SF, PEV

The analysis of variance results presented in the Table 3 above illustrates that model was significant (F=31.433, P<0.05). This implies that the combined independent variables of strategy formulation, performance evaluation, strategy implementation and stakeholder engagement account for a significant amount of variation in organizational performance of Refugee Consortium of Kenya. The significant F value is an indication that the variation in the organizational performance of RCK is not due to chance but rather influenced by the independent factors included in the model. The p-value of 0.000 which is less than the significance level, p = 0.05, confirms statistical significance of the findings.

Beta Coefficients

The size of the coefficient for each independent variable that indicates the magnitude of the impact that variable has on the dependent variable is known as the beta coefficient. The direction of the influence is indicated by the sign of the coefficient (positive or negative). In a regression with a single independent variable, the coefficient shows how much the dependent variable is anticipated to change when the independent variable increases by one, depending on whether it is positive or negative. The regression beta coefficients were used to determine the impact of the independent factors on the dependent variable in the study. Table 4 below shows the regression beta coefficient results.

Model	B	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	30.182	15.801		1.910	.003
	SF	.330	.292	.268	.443	.000
	PEV	.271	.359	.130	.198	.000
	SIM	.318	.207	.226	1.532	.001
	SEN	.327	.202	.240	1.623	.002

a. Dependent Variable: OPF

From the above results, the regression equation was fitted as follows;

$$Y = 30.182 + 0.330x_1 + 0.271x_2 + 0.318x_3 + 0.327x_4 + \epsilon$$

From the equation, when holding all independent factors (strategy formulation, performance evaluation, strategy implementation and stakeholder engagement) constant, the expected value of the dependent variable (organizational performance) is 30.182 with a p-value of 0.003 which less than $p < 0.05$. The regression analysis shows that all independent variables (strategy formulation, performance evaluation, strategy implementation and stakeholder engagement) have a positive and significant influence on the organizational performance of RCK.

The findings show that strategy formulation has a positive and significant influence on organizational performance of RCK ($\beta = 0.330$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). This implies that a unit increase in strategy formulation will lead to a significant increase to organizational performance of RCK by 0.330 units. The standard coefficient (B) is 0.268, which implies that strategy formulation has a moderate positive influence on organizational performance of RCK. Furthermore, the T-value is 0.443 at a p-value = 0.000 which is less than $p < 0.05$, is significant, an indication that the relationship between strategy formulation and organizational performance is robust and is unlikely due to chance.

The study observes that developing clear action plans, mission and vision and formulating a good strategic intent for the organization are key in achieving desirable organizational performance metrics. All other important and vital elements must be integrated in strategy formulation to develop a good strategic decision that will tailor the organization to the realization of its stated goals. This aligns with the views of Ogwen (2023) that all three aspects of strategy i.e. strategic planning, execution, and evaluation have positive and significant relationships and had substantial impact on the success of the SACCOs and that senior managers at the SACCOs should focus on the societies’ mission and approaches to create effective strategies.

Conclusion

The study examined the influence of strategic management practices on the organizational performance of Refugee Consortium of Kenya. The study looked at the influence of strategy formulation on organizational performance of RCK. The study noted that developing clear action plans, mission and vision and formulating a good strategic intent for the organization are key in achieving desirable organizational performance metrics. All other important and vital elements must be integrated in strategy formulation to develop a good strategic decision that will tailor the organization to the realization of its stated goals. The study observed that strategy formulation at RCK was not elaborate and opens to many employees as reflected from their varied and contradictory responses. Hence the need for RCK to integrate all the stakeholders in the process by incorporating their views.

Recommendations

The elements of setting key action plans of the organization, mission and vision, and the strategic purpose upon which the organization pegs its performance must be integrative to accommodate environmental concerns both within and outside the organization. Therefore, the study recommends for robust and dynamic measures to be undertaken that will provide leeway of incorporating organization concerns during strategy formulation in the organization not only in RCK.

Suggestions for further studies

The study concentrated on four elements of strategic management practices to examine their influence on organizational performance of RCK. The study therefore suggests that more researches can be done on other aspects/ strategic management practices that influence performance not only in the humanitarian sector but other sectors and compare results.

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