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Influence of political environment on county integrated development plan policy implementation in Kericho County Government

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Abstract

This study sought to examine the influence of environmental capacity on implementation of County Integrated Development Plans of Kericho County Government. The study was anchored on the resource-based view, new public management theory and game theory. The target population of the study was 74 County Executive Committee members, County secretary, Chief Officers, Ward administrators, Sub-County administrators, Departmental finance officers from 10 departments and Project managers working in the county government of Kericho. A census approach was used to collect data due to the small size of the target population. Primary data was obtained using questionnaires and data was also sourced from relevant documents on implementation of the County Integrated Development Plans. The study found that the political, economic, and technological environment had a positive statistically significant influence on implementing County Integrated Development Plans of the Kericho County Government. To improve effectiveness and efficiency, the county government should pass legislation to curtail governance malpractices, adopt emerging technologies to enhance revenue collection, source financial resources from international development partners, and improve technology usage in service delivery to improve efficiency and citizen satisfaction. The findings will be of importance to policymakers and implementers for efficient policy implementation, the county governments, and academicians and scholars for reference and for carrying out studies on the related area.

Keywords: County Integrated Development Plans, Kericho County Government, political environment, public policy



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Public Interest Statement

Research on political capacity on the implementation of county integrated development plan is important in understanding both the positive and negative forces that influence effective policy implementation. This study will be of significance to the policy makers, county governments and scholars.

1.0 Introduction

The formulation of public policy entails a process by which political vision is translated into actions and programs that deliver desired outcomes by policymakers (Leburu, 2018). The strength of public policy is determined by its ability to solve problems effectively and efficiently, encourage active citizenship and serve government institutions (Mthethwa, 2012). Peters (2015) defines public policy as a set of actions that cause a solution to a policy problem in society. This policy problem may be dissatisfaction regarding a specific social need, demand, or opportunity requiring public intervention. Dente and Bruno (2013) consider public policy as a set of activities that the government engages in so as to enhance the performance of public institutions to change the economic well-being of the society.

Formulating and implementing public policies is necessary in the real world as the environment is constantly changing. The constant changes experienced in the world have resulted in the need to make greater use of evidence in policy design and implementation (Hudson, Hunter & Peckham, 2019). According to rational choice theory, also known as evidence-based theory, there is a need to focus on scientific evidence as a guide in policy-making rather than the use of history and culture (Herfeld, 2020).

Policy implementation refers to the mechanisms, resources and relationships that link policies to programmed action. More specifically, it means carrying out, accomplishing, fulfilling, producing, or completing a given task. Therefore, understanding the nature of policy implementation is essential because international experience indicates that policies, once adopted, are not consistently implemented as envisioned and do not necessarily achieve the intended results (Tebele, 2016). Environmental capacity determines the efficiency and effectiveness of public policy implementation. Administrative capacity entails running the machinery of an economic or political system and translating social-political and collective will into action through the management and efficient implementation (Ansell, Sørensen, & Torfing 2017).

Most developing countries have had their equal share of challenges in policy implementation. For instance, Nigeria faces challenges in implementing public policies, which has hampered Nigeria's national development achievement. The challenges are attributed to lack of attention by the policymakers, financial constraints and lack of willingness by human resources to implement the formulated policies. In some instances, minimal attention is given to the challenges and complexities connected with the execution of policies despite the country being endowed with resources at its disposal. Further, it is revealed that most policies die at the implementation stage while those policies implemented hardly serve the intended purpose (Ahmed & Dantata, 2016).

In order to establish the effects of governance challenges in policy implementation by local governments in Ghana, Arthur (2016) found that ineffective levels of accountability and coordination in the Municipal assembly, Poor management capacity, low levels of public participation and lack of enough financial resources are the reasons behind poor policy implementation in the local governments. The study recommended that administrative staff with sharp analytical skills should be recruited for effective policy implementation to be achieved. Also, there should be an improvement in the management of internally generated revenues and the development of an institutional building that produces the human capital committed to the principles of good governance at the local level.

County governments in Kenya are required to develop a five-year plan which enables them to pursue their mandate to the public. An integrated development plan is a splendid development plan

for county governments that outlines the overall framework for developmental activities which is to be undertaken by county governments. Its main objective is to coordinate the work of all levels of government in a transparent manner to enhance the quality of life for all the citizens and contribute to effective devolution (Ayayo, 2015).

The county-integrated development plan differs from one period to another based on the need of citizens in a specific county setup. The Kericho County Government develops a County Integrated Development Plan every five-year after the election to outline its responsibility to the electorate. According to the Kericho County Integrated Development Plan (2018), achieving the set targets is behind the scheduled time of 2018-2022, implying that there might have been challenges in formulating and implementing the CIPD. This, therefore, calls for further investigation of the influence of environmental capacity on policy implementation.

2.0 Problem Statement

Public policies are the choices that the government makes in response to various public problems or political issues. The Constitution of Kenya promulgated in 2010 provided for devolved governance as a mechanism for sustaining robust development at the sub-national level to ensure the self-determination of local resources and more efficient service delivery (CoK,2010). Towards achieving the constitutional objectives of devolution, county governments formulated County Integrated Development plans as one of the policies to enable economic and social development at the sub-national level. However, County governments have been faced with challenges in executing their functions assigned to them under Schedule IV of the Constitution of Kenya (Abass, Munga & Were, 2017). County governments have attributed their under-performance to an unconducive business environment coupled with insufficient resource allocation and delayed disbursements by the National Government, which has translated to poor financial sustainability, low revenue generation and inefficient implementation of various policies. In Kericho County, despite the County Government coming up with a county integrated development plan for 2018 to 2022 in relation to Vision 2030, the county performance has been low based on the targets set for the period ending 2022 (County Government of Kericho County, 2018).

The poor implementation of CIDP based on factors related to environmental capacity has hampered the implementation of policies geared to improving service delivery and meeting the objectives of devolution under Chapter 11 of CoK. This objective includes; bringing service closer to people and the self-determination of the use of resources. Various scholars have tried to establish the relationship between environmental capacity and efficiency in implementing policies (Leburu, 2018; Ayeko-Kümmeth & Jane, 2015). However, most of these studies have majorly focused on developed countries. There is scant literature on developing countries, especially in the sub-Saharan region. For instance, Surana and Anadon (2015) carried their study in India, Christensen, Læg Reid, Rykkja (2016) in Pakistani and Marino, Chaves, and Dos-Santos Junior (2018) in Mexico. This study, therefore, intended to bridge the research gaps by assessing how environmental capacity influences the implementation of county integrated development plans in the County Government of Kericho.

3.0 Literature Review

3.1 *Implementation of the County Integrated Development Plan*

The implementation of the County Integrated Development Plan is the actualization of government plans and solutions to existing societal problems. Both public and private organizations are charged with implementing policies that address problems affecting the citizens so as to bridge development gaps, address poverty and in essence legitimize existence of governments (Holzer, Gabrielyan & Yang, 2018).

Ojha, Ghimire, Nightingale, Khatri and Dhungana (2016) argue that policy implementations are either bottom- up approach in which the public deliberate, discuss, debate and decide on solutions

to problems that are affecting them, or top –bottom in which the elite deliberate and formulate policies from the top and then through civil service they implement it on the ground without much input from the public.

Effective implementation of the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) requires planning and the mobilization of sufficient resources. The difficult decisions that may have been avoided when policies were drafted must be resolved as plans and guidelines are developed (Henry, 2017). Strong strategic action plans, work plans, budgets, and operational directives are often the missing links between policy formulation and actual implementation. It is therefore paramount that in the implementation process, political, financial, managerial and technical resources are mobilized throughout the implementation process to guard against those opposing the policy changes.

Hill and Hupe (2015) assert that policies fail or succeed depending on the process of implementation. The implementation of the policies entirely depends on three main assumptions: implemented with intention meant to deliver, the goals of the policy having a causal effect through the outcomes and lastly management of the policy formation is of great importance than the implementation of the policy.

In the United States, the concept of public policy implementation is understood from the perspective of decision making and evaluation of the influence of governmental decisions. The major focus of public policy is the implementation of decisions that create desired outputs of a political system such as implementation of industrialization policies, management of the health services among others (Terman & Feiock 2015).

Perry and Christensen (2015) postulate that to enhance development in developing countries, particularly in Africa, governments need to enhance their administrative capacity. Implementation of public policy is done by public administrators, project officers or development agencies on the ground, commonly referred to as street bureaucrats. The purpose of these policies is to solve societal problems and enhance service delivery. Researchers, administrators and other development experts seek the best ways to improve policy implementation and improve satisfaction of their citizens (Henry, 2017).

Good policies formulated by an institution have to be implemented in order to achieve the best desired outcome. The rating of policies implementation in most African countries especially Senegal, Tanzania and Mozambique is poor due to financial constraints, lack of accountability and enforcement techniques, and lack of policy coherence. Further it is believed that proper leadership and stakeholders' involvement does not guarantee for effective policy implementation, (Mugwagwa, Edwards & de Haan, 2015).

A study to determine the challenges and issues associated with public policy implementation in South Africa established that despite the country being one of the best formulated policies in Africa which have resulted in a robust economy, the country is still yielding unexpected implementation challenges. These challenges have been associated with the lack of adequate technical knowledge and skills in the public sector as well as not complying with public policies (Tebele 2016).

In a survey on the impact of policy design and implementation process in Kenyatta University, Gatobu and Nyangaresi (2016) established that the current success of the University was due to the efficient design and implementation of policies. The structural capacity in terms of compliance culture and functional lines of authority ensured that there was managerial good will in policy implementation by making available the required financial resources to aid the implementation process.

To enhance public participation and policy implementation in Kenya, County governments should ensure adequate, reliable and sustainable budgeting and financial resource allocation (County Government of Mombasa, 2020). County governments should provide guidelines to ensure adequate budgetary allocation. Every county department should be allocated adequate resources for human resource capacity building and participation. Finally, the study recommends that funds should be decentralized so as to enable easy access for public engagement programs. From the above analysis,

the major question now is how to improve policy implementation through enhancing administrative capacity which has been identified as a challenge that hampers successful implementation.

The County Government of Kericho Integrated Development Plan (2018) relates to the development plans of the county. The end of the 2022 term target reveals a deviation from expectations that need to be investigated. Currently, Kericho County has huge pending bills, stagnated projects, and some projects whose completion is behind the expected time. This may imply that there are challenges either in policy formulation or ineffectiveness in policy implementation in the county government. Thus, there is need to have a standard guide to successful policy implementation should also be established. This study, therefore, seeks to unravel the cause of ineffective policy implementation, failure in the target population and how to use the knowledge gained from this study to improve policy implementation, which in turn will improve service delivery to the public and the overall well-being of the citizens.

4.0 Literature Review

4.1 *Political Environment and Implementation of CIDP*

The political environment encompasses the government, its institutions, legislations and stakeholders, both private and public, that interact and operate or influence the governance systems of the county government. For efficient and effective implementation of County Integrated Development Plans, the county government should have a good and stable political environment. The various components of a stable political environment are the critical pillar for policy implementations. Hudson, Hunter and Peckham (2019) indicate that when government policies and legislation are better, businesses and other government functions are impacted positively. Khan, Meghani, Liverani, Roychowdhury and Parkhurst (2018) posit that changes in government compositions often lead to policy formulation and implementation changes.

Brenton et al. (2022) sought to examine the evolving theories and the mission links in policy capacity in Brazil. The study, which was empirical and qualitative, reviewed the evolution of policy capacity through a meta-analysis of several studies that focused on policy and administrative sciences. The studies of concern are related to definitions of capacity, competence, capability, and political systems' functioning. The study established that the political system in a country influenced how policy systems operated. The political goodwill, leadership style, resource mobilization, and public participation were found to relate to efficiency in policy implementation directly.

Khan and Van den Heuvel (2007) carried out a study to examine the effect of political influence on health policies processes in Pakistan. The study revealed that political instability and poor power structure led to poor health policy formulation and implementation. A qualitative research design was adopted in carrying out the study. Further, the study relied on documents analysis that included reports from ministries of health, departments and international agencies, and interview of main contributors of healthy policy formulation at international, national, provincial and local levels. The study concluded that political instability has negatively affected healthy policies implementation. Related research will be conducted in Kenya, and it will adopt a descriptive research design where both primary and secondary data will be collected.

Hudson et al. (2019) did an empirical review in the United Kingdom, and they sought to determine the failure of the policies and implementation gap. The study adopted a qualitative research design, relying on secondary data collection methods. The study found that poor policy implementations are associated with some aspects of personal political interests, organizational structure and poor technological systems in place. In other words, when a complex and messy system is found, an institution makes it difficult to ensure efficient and effective policy formulation and implementation. In conclusion, policy implementation does not fail or succeed on its merit. The current study will not be an empirical review but rather a case study that will determine the influence of environmental capacity on implementing the Kericho county integrated development plan.

A study by Christensen, Læg Reid, Rykkja (2016) on organizing for crisis management and building governance capacity and legitimacy established that, organizational arrangements and the legitimacy of governance structures in government bodies influence policy implementation and organization performance. The study was based on organizational theory, which holds that effective policy implementation in governments requires both governance capacity and governance legitimacy. Arguments supporting these findings were substantiated with empirical examples and a synthesis of related literature. The study concluded that there was no optimal formula that could harmonize competing interests' tensions or overcome uncertainty arising from ambiguous government structures. Proper and efficient policy implementation in governments requires flexibility and adoption of critical assets that may be limited by administrative, political and economic context. The findings of this study were arrived from empirical examples and synthesis of related literature. The current study will adopt a quantitative research design to analyze primary and secondary data.

Khan et al. (2018) sought to examine the contribution of external donors on healthy policy phases in Pakistan and Cambodia. The study focused on all the processes of policy setting to policy monitoring. The study adopted a descriptive research design where purposive sampling was applied to select 24 respondents for the study. Fourteen respondents were picked from Pakistan, and ten respondents were chosen from Cambodia from the sample size. The respondents comprised of decision-makers involved in policy formulation and responsible for policy formulation. Primary data was utilized where semi-structured interviews were conducted, and deductive and inductive approaches were used to analyze data. The study findings indicated that donors' financial capacity was the critical factor influencing policy implementation. The study recommends that further research be done in a different sector to ascertain if the same results prevail. However, the study adopted semi-structured interviews as a data collection method that is more subjected to biases. The current study will adopt the use of self-administered questionnaires, which is less biased. Further, this study will be conducted in the Kericho county government to ascertain the influence of financial capacity on county integrated development plan policy implementation.

Arthur (2016) studied the effects of governance challenges in policy implementation by local governments in Ghana. The main focus of the study was to examine the influence of public participation, accountability and coordination, human resource management capacity and financial resource availability of policy implementation in local governments. After inferential data analysis using the regression method, the study revealed ineffective levels of accountability and coordination in the Municipal assembly. Poor management capacity, low levels of public participation, and lack of enough financial resources were also the reasons behind poor policy implementation in the county assembly. The study recommended that for effective policy implementation in the municipal assembly, there should be an improvement in the management of internally generated revenues and the development of an institutional building that produces the human capital committed to the principles of good governance at the local level.

Kaimenyi et al., (2017) sought to examine the influence of the political environment on the implementation of workforce diversity policies in public universities in Kenya. The study adopted a positivist research philosophy and a descriptive cross-sectional research design. A sample size of 393 respondents was determined scientifically using Yamane (1967) formula. Data for the study was collected using a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale. This data was analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The findings established that the political environment had a significant negative influence on implementing workforce diversity policies in public universities. The study indicated that the political environment in public universities inhibited the extent to which workforce diversity in terms of age, gender and ethnicity was achieved.

5.0 Research Designs and Methods

5.1 Designs

The study adopted a descriptive research design to establish the influence of environmental capacity on county integrated development plan implementation in County Governments in Kenya. A descriptive research design was deemed appropriate for the study because it helps the researcher explore and describe the relationship between the study variables in a natural setting without being manipulated. According to Guest (2012), the descriptive research design is important when the researcher needs to gain a broader understanding of the context of the research and the process being adopted. It also makes it possible to generate answers to questions of what, how, and where.

5.2 Methods of Data Analysis

The collected data was edited and classified based on their similarity and then coded using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS Version 23) software for further analysis. According to Collis and Hussey (2014), the main function of the coding process is to create codes and themes from the responses so as to make it easy to analyze data in various ways. Data obtained from secondary sources were analyzed using the content analysis technique, and qualitative data were analyzed thematically. For quantitative data, descriptive data analysis was done by giving data unique numerical codes representing different aspects or measurements of variables in order to generate frequencies, means, and standard deviations effectively. The presentation of data was done using frequency tables.

5.3 Population of the Study

All officers in the County Executive involved in policy implementation formed the target population of this study. Specifically, the target population was comprised of the County executive committee members, County Secretary, County Chief Officers, Ward administrators, Sub- County administrators, Departmental finance officers, and Project managers.

Table 1 Target population of the Study

Strata	Target Population
County executive committee members	9
County secretary	1
County Chief Officers	12
Ward administrators	30
Sub - county administrators	6
Monitoring and Evaluation Officers	11
Project managers	5
TOTAL	74

Source: Kericho County Executive (2023)

6.0 Data Analysis, Interpretations and Discussions

6.1 Political Environment and Implementation of CIDP

The influence of the political environment on the implementation of CIDP was examined using content analysis for open-ended questions as well as frequency and percentages for close-ended questions. The respondents in the interview were given a code name to ensure that all data obtained were confidential. Table 2 was used to analyze the predominant leadership style in the county government.

Table 2: Predominant Leadership Style

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Democratic leadership style	30	42.3	42.3	42.3
Authoritarian leadership style	8	11.3	11.3	53.5
Transformational leadership style	26	36.6	36.6	90.1
Laissez-Faire	7	9.9	9.9	100.0
Total	71	100.0	100.0	

Source: Research (2023)

According to results presented in Table 2, the majority of the respondents, 30(42.3%), indicated that the county leadership was dominated by a democratic leadership style. This was followed by 26(36.6%) respondents who stated it was a transformative leadership style. However, a few respondents believed that the county government used an authoritarian leadership style and laissez-faire, 8(11.3%) and 7(9.9%) respondents, respectively.

On considering the respondents’ opinion, the majority of 15(50%) held that democratic leadership in the county government was associated with the ability of the county government to allow collaborative and continuous discussion and decision-making through consensus of the stakeholder. Other responses indicated that implementation of the CIDP was successful due to the ability of the leadership to conduct regular public participation representing 8(26.7%), departments operating independently representing 6(20.0%), and finally, a decision was made autonomously and centralized to different levels of management department representing 1(3.3%).

Those who choose transformative leadership believe there is a collaboration among teams and departments through existing management and leadership. This resonated through all the discussions of transformative leadership, focusing mainly on collaborative decision-making, teamwork, and creativity among the teams. Those who suggested authoritarianism pointed out the lack of consultation between junior staff and subordinates, while the Laissez-faire asserted that every department section worked in an isolated manner devoid of periodic consultation between the department.

Table 3: Frequency of formulation, implementation, and evaluation of CIDP

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Never	8	11.3
	Rarely	7	9.9
	Often	19	26.8
	Frequently	37	52.1
	Total	71	100.0

Source: Research (2023)

Table 3 revealed that 37(52.1%) of the respondents believe that the county frequently consults widely in formulating, implementing, and evaluating the County Integrated Development Plans (CIDP) of Kericho County. Subsequently, there were 19(26.8%), 7(9.9%), and 8(11.3%) respondents believed that the county often, rarely, and never respectively consulted in implementing the CIPD. The results reveal that majority asserts that there is a frequent review of CIDP.

Table 4: Political Stability of County Government of Kericho

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Stable	8	11.3	11.3	11.3
	Moderately Stable	9	12.7	12.7	23.9
	Stable	42	59.2	59.2	83.1
	Very Stable	12	16.9	16.9	100.0
	Total	71	100.0	100.0	

Source: Research (2022)

Results in table 4 indicated that Kericho county is politically stable, as 42(59.2%) respondents pointed out. This number was followed by 12(16.9%) respondents who aver that it was very stable, 9(12.7%) moderately stable, and 8(11.3%) alluded that the county was not stable. This implies that by Kericho County Government is politically stable, as agreed by the majority of the respondents.

Table 5: Political Ideologies of Leadership in Kericho County Government

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Democratic	9	12.7	12.7	12.7
	Socialist	47	66.2	66.2	78.9
	Conservatism	15	21.1	21.1	100.0
	Total	71	100.0	100.0	

Source: Research (2023)

The response results in table 5 showed that the majority of 47(66.2%) respondents believe that the political ideology in the county government of Kericho is more socialist. 15(21.1%) of the respondents thought it was conservatism, while 9(12.7%) believed it was based on democratic ideologies. It implies that the majority felt that the leadership was socialist.

In response to how county politics influence the implementation of County integrated development plans, the majority, 39(54.9%) of the respondents, had the opinion that it had negatively influenced the implementation of the development plan in the County. Some of the reasons given were that most projects were not equitably distributed across the sub-counties due to external and perceived vested interest by top leadership and MCAs leading to skewed implementation,” as indicated by 23 respondents. Negative political influence resulted in a slowdown in implementation, vested interest in the distribution of resources, unbalanced and lack of equitable distribution of resources and projects, and negligence of some leaders in the development plan. 25(35.2%) respondents believed that it positively impacted the implementation of development policies. The majority of those who thought that it had a positive influence on the implementation of development policies were of the idea that “it has a great influence on the implementation of county integration development plan because politicians have a lot of influence in county affairs decision, planning as well as allocation of resources” as explained by respondent 12. However, 7(9.9%) of the respondents were neutral since they believed they either had negligible contribution or some ideas had negative and positive effects on county development. It is because there was both positive and negative benefit which depended on where the vested interest would positively or negatively influence the outcome of the implementation process.

In responses to what other political factors affected the implementation of CIDP majority of 26(36.6%) respondents asserted that conflict of interest affects the implementation negatively.

National political influence and policies were rated second after 21(29.6%) respondents asserted that it influences the implementation plan. Others that registered low responses were nepotism, clannism, and discrimination at 12(16.9%) respondents. Leadership wrangles between the county executive and the county assembly led to stalemates, hence delay in the budget procedure, as indicated by 10(14.1%) respondents. Conflict of interest, national political influence, policies, nepotism, clannism, and discrimination, including leadership wrangles between the county executive and county assembly, negatively impact the implementation process of County integrated development.

These findings support those of Khan *et al.*, (2018), Hudson et al. (2019), and Christensen, Læg Reid, and Rykkja (2016), that indicated that changes in government compositions often led to policy formulation and implementation changes. Similarly, Brenton et al. (2022) established that the political system in a country influences how policy systems operate. These systems include political goodwill, leadership style, resource mobilization, and public participation, which directly relate to policy implementation efficiency.

Conclusion

The findings show that no single style of governance was predominant in the county government of Kericho. This was indicated by the mixed reactions from the respondents who were asked about the prevailing leadership style in the county. However, the majority of the respondents indicated that the democratic leadership style was the most used. It was also established the ability of the leadership to make decisions through consultation and consensus had a significant influence on policy implementation. Leaders also allowed collaborative and continuous discussions and decisions. Policy implementation was ineffective due to fewer citizens' consultations through public participation; therefore, the study established that some decisions were made autonomously and implemented without input from the department heads.

The study also established the county government was politically stable and that the leadership had a socialist and conservative political ideology which negatively influenced the implementation of the CIDP. Inefficiency in the implementation of the policy was also attributed to the selfish interest of some county leaders characterised by a conflict of interest.

The study concluded the political factors under study influenced the implementation of CIDPs by the county government of Kericho to a greater extent. The democratic and transformational leadership styles possessed by the county leadership enhanced effectiveness in implementing CIDPs. The study further concluded that the political environment was stable, and the political ideology of the political leadership was largely socialist, with a few attributes of conservatism. Finally, the study concluded that political influence (favouritism, conflict of interest, nepotism, and National government influence) had a negative influence on the implementation of CIDP.

Recommendations

The study recommends that the political leadership style be visionary, democratic, and transformative. This is due to the fast-changing social culture that can be solved effectively. In addition, the county assembly should pass legislation to curtail governance malpractices such as favouritism, conflict of interest, nepotism, and National government influence on county politics to ensure effectiveness in service delivery through the implementation of CIDP. Finally, the study recommends that the political ideology be democratic.

Suggestion for Further Studies

Due to the changes in leadership and management in different industries, the study suggested that the influence of political influence on policy implementation be carried out in a different sector of the economy.

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