

The moderating effect of the political commitment on the relationship between strategic management approach and performance of county governments in Kenya

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Abstract:

This study was to appraise the effect of political commitment on performance of county governments in Kenya. Questionnaire was the data collection instrument used to collect primary data from seven counties identified by the researcher as the best performing counties out of the 47 counties of Kenya. The study was carried out on Seven Regions of Kenya where the Researcher picked on the best performing County from each region. The Seven Counties under scope are: Machakos, Kakamega, Murang'a, Migori, Kilifi, Nakuru and Nairobi. Specifically, the study sought to determine the moderating effect of the political commitment on the relationship between strategic management approach and performance of county governments in Kenya. Correlation research design was used across the selected seven counties.. Questionnaire was used to collect data using drop and pick method. Descriptive statistics such as mean, percentage, standard deviation and inferential statistics, namely; regression analysis and correlation analysis were further used as a test of study hypotheses. It was established that political commitment had an insignificant moderating effect in the relationship between strategic management approach and the performance of county governments in Kenya. However, positive relationship was reported between the moderating variable, political commitment and the performance of county governments. The findings articulated that political commitment significantly affected the performance of county governance. From the findings, the study concludes that County government managers should pursue good relationships with the politicians to improve on their perception of political commitment.

Key Words: Political Commitment, Performance, County Governments

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I. Background

Political Commitment refers to the will power to take action and to keep on acting until the work is done. This involves the mobilization of political institutions and systems allocating resources adopting policies, and synchronizing reactions for as long as necessary to ensure that results are achieved. Political commitment is needed to foster national and international partnerships, which should be linked to long-term strategic action plans prepared by the county governments. Strategic action plans should address technical and financial requirements and promote accountability for results at all levels of the county government system; political commitment should be backed up by national legislation. Public and Private Partnerships (PPPs) will help improve county governments' management in terms of access to quality services, equity and quality (1).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Building Political Commitment calls for the willingness on the part of leaders to use their positions, in so far as possible, to support effective action in the development of the society. This action needs to be based on the goodwill of the national leaders in supporting the growth and development of the communities. National leaders include not only government and political leaders but also community, civil, private sector, business, education, religious, military, non-governmental organization, many other leaders. This study sought to appraise the moderation effect of the political commitment to the relationship between strategic management approach and performance of county governments and thus fill the knowledge gap.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The study sought to answer a key question: To what extent does political commitment affect the relationship between strategic management practices and the performance of county governments in Kenya?

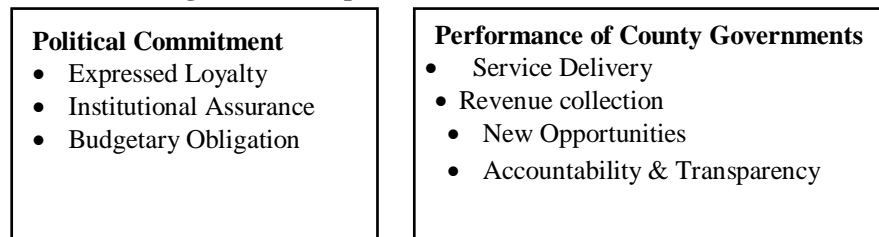
II. Literature Review

Political commitment is needed to foster national and international partnerships, which should be linked to long-term strategic action plans prepared by the county governments. Strategic action plans should address technical and financial requirements and promote accountability for results at all levels of the county government system; political commitment should be backed up by national legislation. Public and Private Partnerships (PPPs) will help improve county governments' management in terms of access to quality services, equity and quality (1).

Arising from the literature review, the following represents the conceptualization of the study.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Political commitment indicators include: expressed loyalty; institutional assurance and budgetary obligation. Expressed loyalty is a strong political commitment on leadership. It is measured indirectly by examining the statements, policies, and actions of leaders. It can be measured by what leaders say or by what they actually do.

Various levels of political commitment are possible. Leaders who speak out publicly about the importance of county governance are expressing a commitment to the issue and creating a climate that encourages solutions. Under expressed loyalty, it is also necessary for leaders to establish enabling policies, propose and support programs, provide funding, appoint good people to key positions, demand accountability, and participate in regular program reviews and evaluations. Clear and sustained political commitment by both national and county governments is crucial if county governments' strategies are to be effectively implemented (7).

Institutional assurance is required to support the overall structural and financial changes needed to improve the availability, distribution and motivation of competent County Government workers. Special efforts, including good strategic planning, will be needed to ensure the availability of adequate and competent human resources. Strong institutional assurance ensures respect for basic human rights and the integration of humanitarian and development assistance are necessary to address any crises that may arise.

Budgetary obligation calls for, strong funding commitments, enabling policies and the adoption of innovations in service delivery will lead to strongest results in the management of county governments. This is through funding of county government projects. High levels of national funding can result only when the political commitments exist to make the county projects a priority program for scarce national resources. Funding can be tracked over time and compared across counties if converted to a per capita basis and compared to a standard metric such as gross domestic product per capita (Patterson, 2014).

III. Research Methodology

To test the effect of moderating variable the political commitment on the relationship between strategic management practices on performance of county governments in Kenya, this study adopted correlational research design. Data was collected once over a period of one month from a sample of seven counties in Kenya to represent Kenya as a region. The correlation analysis was used to show the positive correlation between the predictor and response variables while regression analysis was used to explain the relationship between the predictor and response variables. R-squared was used to provide the strength of the relationship between the model and the response variable and determine its goodness fit. While F statistics was used to test the significance of the regression model.

Measurement of Variables

This study variables were measured using continuous indicators. Political Commitment was measured by nine items namely: County has received political support for critical issues, Political commitment has strengthened county development, County political governance ensure county operate within regulations,

County ensures new policies are brought to knowledge of all stakeholders, Budgetary support is the biggest indicator of political commitment, via budgetary support, political commitment has led to sustainable development, County assembly ensures budget is aligned to strategic plan, National political commitment to development is stronger now than it was in central government era, County enjoys goodwill of national political commitment in growth and development.

A five point likert scale ranging from one (Strongly agree) to five (Strongly disagree) was used. This measure has been adopted from previous research of (5). The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient value was 0.91 and this is an indication that the internal reliability of the used scale was quite satisfactory. According to (3), for normal research, reliability that is as low as 0.7 is basically acceptable. The results, based on coefficient value indicates that the data has high level of internal consistency. Several parameters were used to measure county government performance. They include: new opportunities benefit all stakeholders, county arrangements ensure inclusion and fairness, county cake is shared among all county residents, employee satisfaction via involvement and empowerment, lead to efficiency in internal processes, efficient public procurement practices are pursued to ensure sound management of expenditure, county relates well with all stakeholders, good communication process ensure internal processes run smoothly, suppliers are satisfied with quality and level of information in contracts and county emphasizes assessment of citizens needs and expectations. A five point likert scale ranging from one (Strongly agree) to five (Strongly disagree) was used. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient value for performance was 0.78 and this indicates that the internal reliability of the scale was satisfactory.

IV. Research Findings And Discussions

Descriptive Analysis for Political Commitment

The study sought to determine the moderation effect of the political commitment on the relationship between strategic management approach practices and performance of county governments. On a five point Likert scale, the respondents were asked to respond to different questions as outlined in Table 1. Asked whether political commitment has strengthened county development 53.9% agreed with the statement while 46.1% disagreed. 57% of the respondents reported that counties receive political support for critical issues while 43% disagreed with the statement. Further, 72.7% indicated that counties ensure new policies are brought to knowledge of all stakeholders while 27.3% disagreed with the statement. Seventy one point one percent of the respondents reported that national political commitment to development is stronger now than it was in central government era while 28.9% disagreed with this statement. While 74.2% of the respondents indicated that county political governance ensure counties operate within regulations, 25.8% disagreed with the statement. 82.1% of the respondents indicated that county assembly ensures budget is aligned to strategic plan while 17.9% of the respondents indicated this is not so. Asked whether budgetary support is the biggest indicator of political commitment 84.4% of respondents supported this statement while 15.6% were against the statement. On the statement that political commitment has led to sustainable development, 78.9% supported this while 21.1% disagreed. The results indicated that political commitment has a positive moderating effect on the relationship between strategic management approach practices and performance of county governments.

Table 1: Political Commitment

	St.D	Sl.D	D	A	St.A	Summary			
	%	%	%	%	%	Mn	Md	Mo	S.D
Political commitment has strengthened county development	3.1%	17.2%	25.8%	47.7%	6.2%	3	4	4	1
County has received political support for critical issues	1.6%	24.2%	17.2%	53.1%	3.9%	3	4	4	1
National political commitment to development is stronger now than it was in central government era	2.3%	14.8%	11.7%	67.2%	3.9%	4	4	4	1
County enjoys goodwill of national political commitment in growth and development	0.0%	9.4%	9.4%	68.0%	13.3%	4	4	4	1
County political governance ensure county operate within regulations	0.0%	15.6%	10.2%	71.9%	2.3%	4	4	4	1
County assembly ensures budget is aligned to strategic plan	0.0%	5.5%	12.5%	72.7%	9.4%	4	4	4	1
Budgetary support is the biggest indicator of political commitment	0.0%	10.9%	4.7%	74.2%	10.2%	4	4	4	1
Via budgetary support, political commitment has led to sustainable development	3.1%	5.5%	12.5%	75.0%	3.9%	4	4	4	1

Performance of County Governance

Several factors were used to measure performance of County Governments in the study. The study findings showed that 81.2% of the respondents reported that their counties emphasized on assessment of citizen needs and expectations, whereas 18.8% reported that counties did not have any emphasize on assessment of citizen needs and expectations. This is an indication that needs and expectations of citizens in most counties were considered and met. Second, 51.6% of the respondents reported that the County cake is shared among all county residents, while 48.4% reported that the county cake is not shared among all county residents. The findings are an indication that the county government management should improve on sharing of county cake among citizens in their respective counties. Sixty Five point Seven percent (65.7%) reported that employee satisfaction, via involvement and empowerment lead to efficiency in internal processes as while 34.3% of the respondents disagreed with the statement. These results show that employees in most counties were involved and empowered in running of the county governments. When asked whether good communication process ensure internal processes run smoothly, 75% of the respondents agreed with the statement while 25% of the respondents disagreed with the statement a prove that good communication resulted to improved performance. Further, the respondents were asked if county arrangements ensured inclusion and fairness, 53.9% of the respondents reported that the arrangements included stakeholders and were fair while 46.3% reported non-inclusion and unfair.

These results posed a platform where the county governments should improve on inclusion and fairness in their operation management to improve on performance of county governments. When asked if county governments pursued efficient public procurement practices to ensure sound management of expenditure, majority of the respondents (65.7%) agreed to the statement while 34.3% disagreed with the statement. The results show that most counties applied effective public procurement practices that ensured sound management of expenditure and this led to improvement in performance. The researcher further asked the respondents whether the suppliers are satisfied with quality and level of information in county government contracts and 55.5% reported that they were while 44.5% disagreed with the statement. The results communicate that county governments should consider improving the quality and level of information in county government contracts.

Table 2: Performance of County Governments

	St.D %	Sl.D %	D %	A %	St.A %	Mn	Md	Mo	S.D
County emphasizes assessment of citizen needs and expectations	0.0%	7.8%	10.9%	78.1%	3.1%	4	4	4	1
County cake is shared among all county residents	6.2%	23.4%	18.8%	47.7%	3.9%	3	4	4	1
Employee satisfaction, via involvement and empowerment, lead to efficiency in internal processes	0.8%	22.7%	10.9%	64.1%	1.6%	3	4	4	1
Good communication process ensure internal processes run smoothly	0.0%	11.7%	13.3%	67.2%	7.8%	4	4	4	1
New opportunities benefit all stakeholders	4.7%	26.6%	25.0%	42.2%	1.6%	3	3	4	1
County arrangements	5.5%	19.5%	21.1%	51.6%	2.3%	3	4	4	1
Efficient public procurement practices are pursued to ensure sound management of expenditure	2.3%	10.2%	21.9%	64.1%	1.6%	4	4	4	1
Suppliers are satisfied with quality and level of information in contracts	0.8%	20.3%	23.4%	53.9%	1.6%	3	4	4	1
County relates well with all stakeholders	0.0%	21.1%	31.2%	43.8%	3.9%	3	3	4	1

Effect of the Moderating Variable on the relationship between the Study Variables

To test the moderation effect of political commitment on the relationship between strategic management approach and county government performance, county government performance was regressed against Strategic Management Approach, Political commitment and products of strategic management approach. The results are presented in Tables 3, 4 and 5.

Table 3: ANOVA of the model of study variables

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1506.274	9	167.364	1628.213	.000
Residual	12.232	119	.103		
Total	1518.506	128			

As shown in Table 3, the predictor variables (strategic management approach, political commitment and products of political commitment and strategic management approach) explained 99.2 percent of the variance in County Government Performance (R- Square=0.992). On average, political commitment has a positive moderation effect on the relationship between strategic management approach and county governance as indicated by the positive change in R square when the interaction effect of political commitment is factored.

Table 4: Variables Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.993	.987	.987	.40001
2	.996	.992	.991	.32061

To test the hypothesis, t-test was used and the results are discussed below and presented in Table 5. On its own, political commitment had a significant positive effect on county government performance ($\beta=0.626$, p-value=0.000). The study findings revealed that political commitment strengthened counties development and that counties receive political support for critical issues. New policies are brought to knowledge of all stakeholders. National political commitment to development is stronger with the County Governments than it was in central government era. County political governance ensures counties operate within regulations and county assembly ensures budget is aligned to strategic plan.

The findings further revealed that budgetary support is the biggest indicator of political commitment and political commitment has led to sustainable development. The findings revealed that political commitment has a positive moderating effect on the relationship between strategic management approach and performance of county governments. This is in line with the works of (2) that elected officials play a great role in the performance of government entities. It further supports the work of (6) that political commitment is a driving force that motivates the management cycle and therefore, every organization should seek political commitment from the very beginning of its planning process.

To determine whether political commitment moderates the relationship between strategic management approach and county government performance, the study tested the hypothesis that political commitment doesn't significantly moderate the relationship between strategic management approach and performance of county governments in Kenya. The hypothesis was not rejected for the interaction between county government performance and strategic management approach (Planning: $\beta=0.123$, p-value=0.533; Governance: $\beta=0.176$, p-value=0.383; Quality Management: $\beta=-0.093$, p-value=0.647; and Innovation: $\beta=-0.213$, p-value=0.074) as indicated by the insignificant regression coefficients. As such, political commitment does not significantly moderate the relationship between strategic management approach and county government performance. This probably points to the independence from political interference that county managers enjoy in pursuing strategic decisions.

The County Governance decentralized the services from the central government to 47 county governments and since each county operates on its own, the national government does not interfere with the operations at the county level. These leaves the county management team with independence from political interference. The managers should, however, interact with politicians as they may bring positive effect in their management adding value and thus creating competitive edge from the counties that choose not to have any political interference. This is in line with the works of (8) whose study on organizational politics and organizational commitment and their effect on budgetary slack creation in public sector demonstrated that the organizational commitment has a statistically significant and negative impact on general political behavior and go along to get ahead.

Table 5: Regression Model Coefficients for Moderator and Study Variables

Model	Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.
	Coefficients		Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Planning	-.276	.720	-.310	-.383	.702
Governance	-.591	.737	-.624	-.802	.424
Quality Management	.212	.702	.226	.302	.763
Innovation	1.007	.417	.989	2.418	.017
Political Commitment	.626	.100	.666	6.226	.000
Planning * Political Commitment	.123	.197	.511	.625	.533
Governance * Political Commitment	.176	.201	.692	.875	.383
Quality * Political Commitment	-.093	.203	-.368	-.459	.647
Innovation * Political Commitment	-.213	.118	-.787	-1.801	.074

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study greatly contradict the hypothesis that political commitment does not affect the relationship between strategic management practices and the performance of county governments in Kenya. The results of the regression analysis indicate that political commitment has significant effect on the relationship between strategic management practices and the performance of county government in Kenya.

V. Summary And Conclusion

This study sought to appraise the moderation effect of the political commitment on the relationship between strategic management approach and the performance of county governments in Kenya. The study established that political commitment had no significant moderating effect between the study variables planning and county government performance. To achieve and maintain the required level of political commitment, strong and active partnership among key stakeholders at county and national levels is needed. This commitment should be linked to long-term strategic management approaches of county governments to address technical and financial requirements, and promote accountability for results at all levels of the administration system. Based on the findings of the study, political commitment does not significantly moderate the relationship between strategic management approach and county government performance. On its own however, political commitment had a significant positive effect on county government performance an indication that political commitment is a driving force that motivates the management cycle.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of the study, the study recognized insignificant contribution of political commitment on the relationship between depended and dependent variables. The study, therefore, recommends that managers of county governments should cultivate measures that pursue a positive commitment to attract positive political influence that would be beneficial to county government performance.

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