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**INFLUENCE OF STRATEGIC DIRECTION ON THE PERFORMANCE OF
HEALTH SECTOR NGOS IN KENYA**

Shem Kipkoech Cheruiyot, Prof. Peter Kihara, PhD and Dr. Hellen Mugambi, PhD





Influence of Strategic Direction On the Performance of Health Sector NGOS in Kenya

Shem Kipkoech Cheruiyot

Corresponding Author, Kenya Methodist University

Prof. Peter Kihara, PhD

Lecturer, Business School, Department of Business Administration, Kenya Methodist University

Dr. Hellen Mugambi, PhD

Lecturer, Business School, Department of Business Administration, Kenya Methodist University

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Abstract:

Purpose of the Study: This study examined the influence of strategic direction on the performance of health sector non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Kenya. Specifically, it assessed how vision, mission, strategic objectives, stakeholder alignment, and strategic communication contribute to organizational performance, with the aim of providing empirical evidence to support strategic management practices in health NGOs.

Methodology: The study adopted a positivist philosophy and descriptive cross-sectional research design. A sample of 183 programme managers was selected from 340 registered health sector NGOs using stratified random sampling.

Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and simple linear regression to determine relationships.

Findings: Out of 183 questionnaires distributed, 175 were returned, yielding a 95.6% response rate. Descriptive findings indicated that most health sector NGOs possessed well-defined strategic direction characterized by clear vision, mission, stakeholder engagement, and alignment with national health priorities, although communication of strategic goals required improvement. Pearson correlation analysis established a positive and statistically significant relationship between strategic direction and organizational performance ($r = 0.268$, $p < 0.01$). Regression analysis further confirmed that strategic direction significantly predicted organizational performance ($\beta = 0.268$, $t = 3.662$, $p < 0.001$), leading to rejection of the null hypothesis and confirming its positive influence.

Conclusion: The study concludes that strategic direction significantly enhances the performance of health sector NGOs in Kenya. Organizations with clearly defined and effectively implemented strategic direction achieve better organizational outcomes. Strengthening communication of strategic priorities and continuously reviewing organizational direction will further improve alignment, effectiveness, sustainability, and long-term organizational performance.

Keywords: *Strategic Direction; Organizational Performance; Health Sector NGOs; Resource-Based Theory*

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Strategic direction refers to the process through which an organisation defines its vision, mission, long-term goals and the broad course of action it intends to pursue in fulfilling its mandate. It sits at the core of strategic management because it provides the frame of reference within which planning, implementation and control decisions are made. For mission-driven organisations such as health sector non-governmental organisations (NGOs), whose survival depends heavily on donor confidence, stakeholder trust and demonstrable programme impact, a clearly articulated strategic direction is widely regarded as a foundation for achieving sustainable organisational performance (Thomas et al., 2025).

Internationally, evidence from both Europe and Asia illustrates the importance of strategic direction for organisational performance in the health sector. In Belgium, Vandersmissen, George and Voets (2024) examined strategic planning within public sector organisations and found that the manner in which strategic plans were formulated and communicated shaped both managerial and citizen perceptions of organisational performance, operating through several mediating mechanisms linked to transparency and stakeholder engagement. Their findings suggest that organisations which embed strategic direction within participatory planning processes tend to enjoy stronger legitimacy and perceived effectiveness among their stakeholders.

In Jordan, Abu Al Hijaa (2023) studied the influence of strategic management practices on the performance of hospitals operating within a resource-constrained healthcare system. The study found that hospitals which adopted deliberate strategic management practices, anchored on a clear strategic direction, recorded improved financial stability, better patient outcomes and higher staff satisfaction, although fragmented coordination and limited resources continued to constrain the full realisation of these benefits. Taken together, these two cases from Europe and Asia demonstrate that, regardless of context, strategic direction functions as an important driver of organisational performance in the health sector, with the strength of its effect shaped by resource availability and the quality of stakeholder engagement.

Within Africa, the relationship between strategic direction and performance has received growing scholarly attention, particularly among health-related non-governmental organisations. In Nigeria, representing the West African region, Korfii et al. (2026) examined the institutionalisation of monitoring and evaluation systems, a mechanism through which strategic direction is operationalised and tracked, among public health NGOs. The study found that ninety-four percent of the sampled organisations had dedicated monitoring and evaluation units and that a majority of respondents agreed that monitoring and evaluation findings meaningfully informed programmatic decisions, confirming that structured strategic oversight mechanisms are strongly associated with improved programmatic performance.

In Southern Africa, Chiwawa and Wissink (2024) studied strategy execution within South African municipalities and established that effective translation of strategic direction into concrete operational actions significantly enhanced service delivery outcomes. Their study emphasised that a well-articulated strategic direction yields performance benefits only when it is matched by disciplined execution and adequate institutional capacity. These regional findings collectively suggest that, across differing African contexts, strategic direction contributes meaningfully to

organisational and service delivery performance, but that its effect is realised only where organisations also invest in the structures and capacity needed to execute it.

In Kenya, the non-governmental organisation sector plays a central role in complementing government efforts in healthcare delivery, particularly in underserved counties and among vulnerable populations. Kenyan health sector NGOs operate under considerable resource constraints, short donor funding cycles and high accountability demands, all of which place a premium on clear strategic direction as a stabilising and performance-enhancing factor. Kamau and Donoghue (2021) examined strategic planning and organisational performance among Kenyan NGOs and found a positive relationship between the two, noting that organisations with clearly documented strategic plans tended to record better operational outcomes. Similarly, (Thomas et al., 2025) established that strategic management practices, including the setting of strategic direction, were positively associated with the performance of NGOs operating in Kenya.

At a more localised level, Mailu and Kariuki (2022) studied non-governmental organisations in Nairobi County and found that strategic leadership, closely tied to the articulation of strategic direction, had a positive influence on organisational performance. Despite this growing body of Kenyan evidence, most existing studies have examined strategic direction alongside other strategic management practices or within NGOs generally, rather than isolating its specific influence on the performance of health sector NGOs, which operate under distinct regulatory, donor and public health accountability pressures. This gap forms the basis for the present study.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Health sector non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play a vital role in complementing government efforts to improve healthcare access, disease prevention, health promotion, and emergency response in Kenya. Despite their significant contribution, many health sector NGOs continue to experience performance challenges reflected in declining donor funding, project implementation delays, limited organisational sustainability, and difficulties in achieving strategic objectives. Recent evidence indicates that donor transitions and changing funding priorities have adversely affected the sustainability and service delivery of many health-focused civil society organisations in Kenya, increasing the need for stronger strategic management practices (Omale, 2025). Strategic direction provides organisations with a clear vision, mission, strategic objectives, and long-term priorities that guide resource allocation and organisational decision-making. According to Kawiti and Okello (2022), strategic planning and internal strategic capabilities significantly influence the performance of national health NGOs in Kenya, suggesting that organisations with well-defined strategic direction are more likely to achieve superior performance. Nevertheless, many NGOs continue to struggle with translating strategic priorities into effective operational outcomes, resulting in inconsistent organisational performance despite having formal strategic plans. Although previous studies have examined strategic management practices and organisational performance in public institutions, private firms, and general NGOs, limited empirical evidence specifically investigates the influence of strategic direction on the performance of health sector NGOs in Kenya. This contextual knowledge gap constrains evidence-based strategic decision-making within the sector. Therefore, this study sought to examine the influence of strategic direction on the performance of health sector NGOs in Kenya.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of strategic direction on the performance of health sector NGOs in Kenya.

1.4 Research Hypothesis

H01: Strategic direction does not significantly influence the performance of health sector NGOs in Kenya.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review: Resource-Based Theory

This study was anchored on the Resource-Based Theory (RBT), whose foundations were laid by Penrose (1959) and later formalised by Barney (1991). The theory holds that sustainable organisational performance is derived primarily from an organisation's ability to acquire, develop and deploy resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable, commonly referred to as VRIN resources, rather than solely from external market conditions. Recent scholarship continues to affirm the relevance of RBT within contemporary strategic management research. Ristyan, Putro and Siallagan (2023), in a systematic review of resource-based decision-making literature, observed that organisations increasingly rely on dynamic resource-allocation mechanisms to sustain competitive advantage amid volatile operating environments, reinforcing the continued centrality of internal capabilities, of which strategic direction-setting is one, to organisational performance.

In the context of health sector NGOs in Kenya, RBT provides a useful theoretical lens for understanding how strategic direction contributes to performance. Strategic direction enables organisational leaders to identify priority programmes and allocate scarce financial, human and knowledge resources towards their achievement, in a manner consistent with the organisation's overall mission. Health NGOs whose strategic direction is clearly aligned with their available resource base are, according to the theory, more likely to achieve improved operational efficiency, financial sustainability and stakeholder satisfaction than those whose strategic direction is poorly defined or weakly communicated.

Although RBT has been criticised for placing greater emphasis on internal organisational resources while paying comparatively limited attention to external environmental dynamics, and for the largely static nature of the VRIN framework in fast-changing operating contexts (Ristyan et al., 2023), the theory remains highly applicable to the present study. It offers a coherent explanation of how strategic direction, as an internal strategic management practice, enables health sector NGOs to convert their organisational resources into measurable performance outcomes.

2.2 Empirical Review: Strategic Direction and Performance

A growing body of empirical literature affirms that strategic direction is an important determinant of organisational performance across sectors and contexts. In Kenya, Lerai, Rintari and Moguche (2023) examined the influence of strategic direction on the performance of commercial-based parastatals and established that strategic direction had a significant effect on performance, with operational staff playing an important role in translating the direction set by top management into day-to-day processes. In a related study, Ng'ang'a, Waiganjo and Njeru (2023) investigated tourism government agencies in Kenya and similarly found that strategic direction significantly influenced



organisational performance, further affirming the pattern in which strategic leadership sets direction while operational staff are responsible for its implementation.

Within the Kenyan non-governmental organisation sector specifically, Kamau and Donoghue (2021) found a positive relationship between strategic planning, of which strategic direction forms a foundational component, and the performance of NGOs, while Thomas et al. (2025) similarly established that strategic management practices, including the setting of organisational direction, were positively associated with NGO performance outcomes. Mailu and Kariuki (2022), focusing specifically on NGOs in Nairobi County, found that strategic leadership, closely intertwined with the articulation of strategic direction, had a positive and meaningful influence on organisational performance.

Evidence from outside Kenya reinforces these findings. In Nigeria, Korfii et al. (2026) found that the institutionalisation of monitoring and evaluation systems, a mechanism through which strategic direction is tracked and reinforced, had a strong positive influence on the programmatic performance of public health NGOs, with the majority of surveyed organisations reporting that such systems had improved their overall programme outcomes. In South Africa, Chiwawa and Wissink (2024) demonstrated that effective execution of strategic direction significantly enhanced service delivery performance within municipal government structures, while in Jordan, Abu Al Hijaa (2023) found that hospitals guided by clearly defined strategic management practices recorded improved financial and patient-outcome performance. In Belgium, Vandersmissen, George and Voets (2024) established that the manner in which strategic direction was formulated and communicated shaped both managerial and public perceptions of organisational performance.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework provides a structured representation of the key variables under investigation and the presumed relationship between them, thereby guiding the interpretation of research findings in relation to the study's objectives (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). In this study, the independent variable is strategic direction, encompassing the articulation, communication, environmental alignment and stakeholder-informed nature of an organisation's vision, mission and long-term goals. The dependent variable is the performance of health sector NGOs, reflecting programme target achievement, resource utilisation, stakeholder satisfaction, programme reach and overall organisational effectiveness. The study conceptualised strategic direction as an antecedent that, when clearly defined, communicated and aligned with the external operating environment, positively influences the extent to which health sector NGOs achieve their intended performance outcomes.

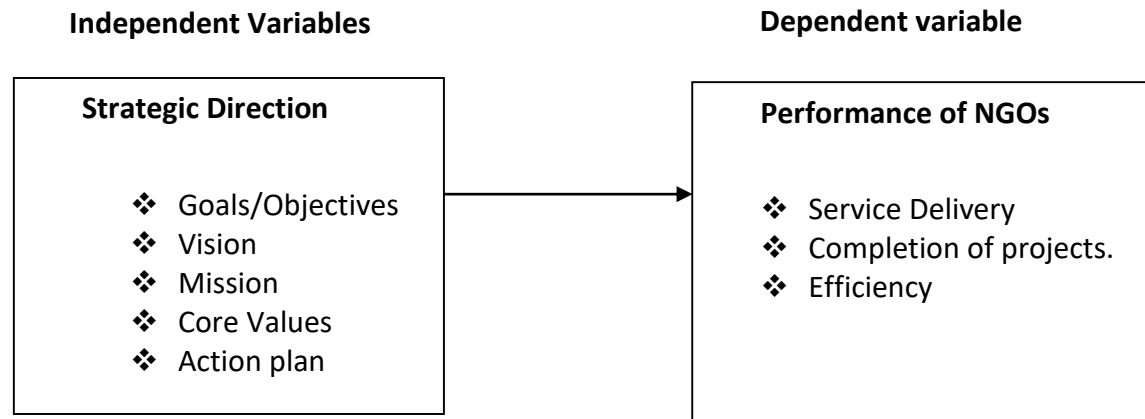


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was anchored on the positivist research philosophy, which emphasises objectivity, empirical observation and the use of quantitative methods to establish relationships between variables. A descriptive cross-sectional research design was employed to collect data from a representative sample of health sector NGOs at a single point in time. The target population comprised 340 actively operating health sector NGOs registered with the NGO Coordination Board of Kenya, from which a sample of 183 programme managers was selected using Yamane's formula and stratified random sampling to ensure adequate representation across organisational sizes and geographical coverage. Primary data were collected using structured, self-administered questionnaires based on a five-point Likert scale to measure strategic direction and organisational performance. The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations, as well as inferential statistics comprising Pearson correlation and simple linear regression, to determine the influence of strategic direction on the performance of health sector NGOs in Kenya. The findings were presented using tables to facilitate interpretation, discussion and the drawing of evidence-based conclusions.

4.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Response Rate

Questionnaires were distributed to 183 potential respondents who had been purposively and systematically sampled across health NGOs operating at national and county levels in Kenya. Table 1 presents the response rate outcomes.

Table 1: Response Rate of Study Participants

Response Status	Frequency	Percent (%)
Responded	175	95.6

Did Not Respond	8	4.4
Total	183	100.0

As shown in Table 1, a total of 175 questionnaires were successfully completed and returned, yielding a response rate of 95.6 percent. Only 8 respondents, representing 4.4 percent of the sample, did not return their questionnaires. This high response rate was attributable to prior engagement with NGO leadership, sustained follow-up communication and the self-administered nature of the questionnaire, which minimised logistical barriers to participation. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2019), a response rate exceeding 70 percent in organisational research is generally considered adequate for drawing statistically meaningful conclusions. The response rate of 95.6 percent achieved in this study therefore provided a sufficiently robust and representative dataset for the descriptive, correlation and regression analyses that followed.

4.2 Descriptive Results on Strategic Direction

Table 2 presents the descriptive results on strategic direction, based on responses to a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD).

Table 2: Descriptive Results on Strategic Direction

Statement	SA%	A%	UD%	D%	SD%	Mean	SD
Clearly articulated and documented vision and mission	18.3	37.1	22.3	16.6	5.7	3.60	.903
Vision and mission regularly reviewed and updated	22.9	38.3	14.3	14.3	10.3	3.79	1.133
Strategic goals communicated effectively to staff and stakeholders	12.6	30.9	19.4	24.6	12.6	3.33	1.100
Regular stakeholder engagement to align direction with expectations	30.3	42.9	11.4	11.4	4.0	4.15	.997
Leadership demonstrates strong commitment to strategic direction	18.3	34.3	17.1	19.4	10.9	3.55	1.133
Strategic direction informed by external environmental analysis	20.0	38.9	22.3	14.3	4.6	3.66	.827
Strategic direction aligned with national health priorities	28.6	42.3	10.3	9.1	9.7	4.02	1.162
Staff understand and can articulate strategic direction	24.6	44.6	16.0	12.0	2.9	3.94	.796
Strategic direction guides resource mobilization and donor engagement	25.1	38.9	13.7	12.0	10.3	3.88	1.270
Clear strategic direction has improved performance outcomes	22.9	36.6	15.4	13.7	11.4	3.79	1.252

The findings in Table 2 show that respondents generally held favourable views of their organisations' strategic direction, with mean scores ranging from 3.33 to 4.15 across the ten statements. The highest level of agreement was recorded for the statement that organisations conduct regular stakeholder engagement to align strategic direction with beneficiary and donor expectations (M = 4.15, SD = 0.997), followed closely by alignment of strategic direction with

national health priorities and Kenya's health sector development agenda ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 1.162$). These results suggest that health sector NGOs in Kenya place considerable emphasis on external alignment, ensuring that their strategic direction remains responsive to both donor expectations and national policy priorities. However, the comparatively lower mean score recorded for the effective communication of strategic goals and objectives to all staff and key stakeholders ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.100$) indicates that, while strategic direction may be well formulated at the leadership level, its internal dissemination throughout the organisation remains an area of relative weakness. This finding is consistent with the view that strategic direction can only translate into improved performance when it is clearly understood and embraced across all organisational levels, and not solely at the level of senior management (Lerai, Rintari & Moguche, 2023). Overall, the moderately high standard deviations recorded across most items, generally above 0.9, point to notable variation in how strategic direction is experienced across different health sector NGOs, suggesting that organisational size, leadership style and donor relationships may all shape how strategic direction is formulated and internalised.

4.3 Descriptive Results on Organisational Performance

Table 3: Descriptive Results on Organisational Performance of Health NGOs in Kenya

Statement	SA %	A %	UD %	D %	SD %	Mean	SD
Consistently achieves health programme targets and KPIs on time	60.0	34.3	3.4	1.1	1.1	4.73	.579
Quality of health services has improved over three years	20.6	34.3	14.9	22.3	8.0	3.53	1.154
Effective utilization of donor funds, low budget variance	48.0	34.3	6.3	5.7	5.7	4.30	1.069
High stakeholder satisfaction with organizational performance	48.6	34.3	5.7	5.7	5.7	4.31	1.097
Expanded programme reach and coverage over three years	12.6	30.3	14.9	30.3	12.0	3.21	1.211
Improved staff retention and organizational capacity	28.0	40.0	10.9	12.0	9.1	3.87	1.286
Accurate, timely donor and regulatory reporting	21.7	38.3	13.1	18.3	8.6	3.61	1.254
Successfully leveraged strategic partnerships for impact	40.6	37.1	8.6	7.4	6.3	4.17	1.152
Measurable improvement in community health outcomes	30.9	48.0	12.0	6.3	2.9	3.99	.950
Overall health sector performance improved significantly	17.1	36.6	22.9	18.3	5.1	3.43	.962

As shown in Table 3, respondents rated their organisations most favourably on the consistent achievement of health programme targets and key performance indicators within planned timeframes ($M = 4.73$, $SD = 0.579$), the highest mean score recorded across all performance statements. High mean scores were also recorded for stakeholder satisfaction ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 1.097$) and effective utilisation of donor funds with low budget variance ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 1.069$), suggesting that health sector NGOs in the sample generally perform well in meeting immediate

programmatic and financial accountability expectations. In contrast, the lowest mean score was recorded for the expansion of programme reach and coverage over the past three years ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 1.211$), followed by the overall improvement in health sector performance over the same period ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 0.962$). These comparatively lower and more dispersed scores suggest that, although health sector NGOs are generally effective at meeting short-term programme targets and donor accountability requirements, they face greater challenges in achieving sustained, longer-term growth in programme reach and overall sectoral impact. This pattern is consistent with the resource-constrained and donor-cycle-dependent operating environment described in the literature Thomas et al. (2025), in which short funding horizons can limit the scale at which health NGOs are able to expand their programmes, even where day-to-day performance indicators remain strong.

4.4 Inferential Statistics

Bivariate Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to assess the strength and direction of the linear relationship between strategic direction and the performance of health sector NGOs in Kenya. Table 4 presents the correlation results.

Table 4: Pearson Correlation Analysis

		Strategic Direction	Performance
Strategic Direction	Pearson Correlation	1	
	N	175	
Performance	Pearson Correlation	.268**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	175	175

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

The results in Table 4.19 show a positive and statistically significant correlation between strategic direction and the performance of health sector NGOs in Kenya ($r = .268$, $p < .01$), indicating that as health NGOs strengthen their strategic direction, their organisational performance tends to improve correspondingly. Although the strength of this correlation is modest, it is significant at the 0.01 level, confirming that strategic direction is a meaningful, though not the sole, contributor to the performance of health sector NGOs in Kenya.

4.4.2 Regression Analysis

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which strategic direction predicts the performance of health sector NGOs in Kenya. Table 5 presents the model summary.

Table 5: Model Summary for Strategic Direction and Performance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.268	0.072	0.067	0.32737

Predictors: (Constant), Strategic Direction

As shown in Table 5, the correlation coefficient ($R = 0.268$) confirms a positive relationship between strategic direction and performance. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.072$) indicates that strategic direction accounts for approximately 7.2 percent of the variation in the performance of health sector NGOs in Kenya, with the adjusted R^2 of 0.067 confirming that this explanatory power holds even after adjusting for the number of predictors in the model. This relatively modest proportion of explained variance suggests that, although strategic direction significantly predicts performance, the majority of variation in health sector NGO performance is attributable to other organisational, environmental and resource-related factors not captured within this model, consistent with the Resource-Based Theory's broader emphasis on the combined role of multiple internal resources and capabilities in determining organisational performance (Ristyan et al., 2023).

Table 6: ANOVA Results for Strategic Direction and Performance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1.437	1	1.437	13.409	.000
Residual	18.540	173	0.107		
Total	19.977	174			

a. Dependent Variable: Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Strategic Direction

The ANOVA results presented in Table 6 indicate that the overall regression model is statistically significant ($F = 13.409$, $p < 0.001$). This confirms that strategic direction has a statistically significant effect on the performance of health sector NGOs in Kenya, validating the use of the regression model and providing grounds for rejecting the null hypothesis that strategic direction does not significantly influence performance.

Table 7: Regression Coefficients for Strategic Direction and Performance

Model	Variable	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	-0.206	0.295		-0.700	0.485
1	Strategic Direction	0.285	0.078	0.268	3.662	0.000

Dependent Variable: Performance.

Source: Research Data (2026).

The regression coefficients presented in Table 7 indicate that strategic direction is a significant, positive predictor of the performance of health sector NGOs in Kenya ($B = 0.285$, $Beta = 0.268$, $t = 3.662$, $p < 0.001$). This means that a one-unit improvement in strategic direction is associated with a 0.285-unit improvement in organisational performance, holding other factors constant. The corresponding t-value of 3.662 confirms that this relationship is statistically significant at the 0.001 level, while the non-significant constant ($t = -0.700$, $p = 0.485$) indicates that the baseline model intercept does not differ significantly from zero. These results lead to the rejection of the null hypothesis, confirming that strategic direction significantly influences the performance of health sector NGOs in Kenya. This finding is consistent with Lerai, Rintari and Moguche (2023), who

found that strategic direction significantly predicted performance among commercial-based parastatals in Kenya, and with Chiwawa and Wissink (2024), who demonstrated that effective strategic direction and its execution significantly enhanced service delivery performance in South African municipalities.

5.0 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The study sought to determine the influence of strategic direction on the performance of health sector NGOs in Kenya. Descriptive results revealed that respondents generally held favourable perceptions of their organisations' strategic direction, particularly regarding stakeholder engagement and alignment with national health priorities, although the internal communication of strategic goals to all staff emerged as a relatively weaker area. Similarly, respondents rated their organisations highly on the achievement of programme targets, donor fund utilisation and stakeholder satisfaction, but comparatively lower on the expansion of programme reach and long-term sectoral performance improvement. Inferential analysis established a positive and statistically significant correlation between strategic direction and organisational performance ($r = 0.268$, $p < 0.01$). Regression analysis further confirmed that strategic direction significantly and positively predicted performance ($B = 0.285$, $\text{Beta} = 0.268$, $t = 3.662$, $p < 0.001$), explaining approximately 7.2 percent of the variation in performance, and leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. These findings affirm that strategic direction is a significant, though partial, determinant of performance among health sector NGOs in Kenya, operating alongside other organisational and resource-related factors in shaping overall performance outcomes.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The study concludes that strategic direction is a significant and positive predictor of performance among health sector NGOs in Kenya. Organisations that clearly articulate their vision and mission, engage stakeholders in aligning strategic direction with donor and beneficiary expectations, and maintain consistency with national health priorities are more likely to achieve improved programme performance, donor fund utilisation and stakeholder satisfaction. At the same time, the relatively modest proportion of variance in performance explained by strategic direction alone indicates that strategic direction functions as one among several important determinants of health sector NGO performance, rather than as a stand-alone driver.

The comparatively weaker internal communication of strategic goals identified in the descriptive findings suggests that many health sector NGOs in Kenya may be more effective at externally-facing strategic alignment, with donors and policy priorities, than at ensuring that all staff members understand and can articulate the organisation's strategic direction. This internal communication gap represents a missed opportunity for building organisation-wide ownership of strategic goals, which the Resource-Based Theory would suggest is necessary for fully converting strategic direction into a valuable and inimitable organisational capability.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed. First, health sector NGOs should strengthen the internal communication of their strategic direction by holding regular staff briefings, cascading strategic goals through departmental meetings, and developing simple, accessible statements of vision, mission and strategic priorities that all employees, not only senior management, can understand and articulate. Second, NGO boards and senior leadership should



institutionalise structured stakeholder engagement forums that bring together donors, beneficiaries and government health authorities, to ensure that strategic direction remains continuously aligned with both community needs and donor expectations, building on the relatively strong performance already observed in this area.

Third, given that strategic direction alone explained a modest proportion of the variation in performance, NGO leadership should complement strategic direction-setting with deliberate investment in strategy implementation, monitoring and evaluation systems, and resource mobilisation capabilities, so that a well-formulated strategic direction is matched by the operational capacity needed to execute it. Fourth, health sector NGOs seeking to expand their programme reach and coverage, an area identified as comparatively weaker in the performance findings, should explore strategic partnerships, co-funding arrangements and phased scale-up plans that allow programme expansion without compromising financial sustainability. Finally, regulatory and umbrella bodies such as the NGO Coordination Board of Kenya could support the sector by offering capacity-building programmes focused specifically on strategic direction-setting and its communication, given the sector-wide relevance of this practice to organisational performance.

8.0 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Future research should consider examining the combined influence of strategic direction alongside other strategic management practices, such as strategy implementation, evaluation and control, on the performance of health sector NGOs in Kenya, given that strategic direction alone explained only a modest proportion of performance variation in this study. Comparative studies examining differences in the influence of strategic direction across health sector NGOs of varying sizes, funding sources and geographical coverage would also provide useful insights into the contextual factors that moderate this relationship. Additionally, longitudinal studies tracking strategic direction and performance over multiple funding cycles would help to establish whether the observed relationship holds over time, particularly given the short-term donor funding cycles that characterise much of the Kenyan NGO sector.

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