

# Journal of Strategic Management



**ISSN Online: 2616-8472**



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## **Factors Influencing the Implementation of Strategic Plans in Small Manufacturing Firms in Nairobi County**

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**ISSN: 2616-8472**

# Factors Influencing the Implementation of Strategic Plans in Small Manufacturing Firms in Nairobi County

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*How to cite this article:* Nduati P M., Kariuki P & Wanjohi P (2022). Factors Influencing the Implementation of Strategic Plans in Small Manufacturing Firms in Nairobi County. *Journal of Strategic Management*. Vol 6(1) pp. 78-90. <https://doi.org/10.53819/81018102t2045>

## Abstract

An organization's ability to implement its strategy successfully is a result of its ability to overcome obstacles leading to poor strategy implementation. However, a myriad of factors can potentially affect the process by which strategic plans are turned into organizational action. This study sought to determine the factors influencing the implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms in Nairobi County. Specifically, the study examined the effect of strategic innovation, strategic leadership and organizational culture on implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms in Nairobi County. The study was informed by the Contingency theory. The study adopted a descriptive survey research. The study targeted 50 small manufacturing firms in Nairobi County. Purposive sampling was used to select a manager and supervisor in each of the small manufacturing firms. A sample size of 100 respondents was used. A multiple regression analysis was used to establish the relationship between institutional factors and the implementation of strategic plans. SPSS statistical software was used to analyze the data. The results indicated that strategic innovation and implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms is positively and significantly related. Strategic leadership and implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms is positively and significantly related. Lastly, results showed that organization culture and implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms is positively and significantly related. The study concluded that strategic innovation, strategic leadership and organizational culture significantly influence implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms. The study recommends that the small manufacturing firms' should understand the role organization culture play in management of organizations. They should be in a position to build a culture that is aligned to the strategic plans that they adopt. The small manufacturing firms' managers should also develop strategic leadership to coordinate all the other resources to attain the desired goals. Strategic leadership determines success or failure of a strategic plan.

**Key words:** *Strategic Innovation, Strategic Leadership and Organizational Culture, Strategic Plans & Small Manufacturing Firms*

## 1.1 Introduction

Strategy implementation ensures that the elements of a strategic plan are actualized by the authorized execution officers within set timelines and with expected outcomes (Frank, Dalenogare, & Ayala, 2019). It is therefore important that as an organization plans, and sets the agenda for the implementation of the plans. These are critical success factors and indicators of activities steered towards the desired outcomes in a long-term manner. Cândido and Santos (2018) view implementing strategy as the process through which a set of agreed work philosophies is translated into functional and operational targets. Zaidi, Zawawi, Nordin and Ahnuar (2018) support this position when they state that implementation addresses who, where, when and how, and it is thus the tactic that drives the strategy of the company. Strategy implementation moves the organization along its choice of route towards its goal – the fulfilment of its mission, the achievement of its vision. It is the realization of intentions (Friesl, Stensaker & Colman, 2021). While many people believe that formulating an innovative and unique strategy is critical and by itself sufficient to lead a firm to success in today's business world, ensuring that such a strategy works is equally as important. Considering the higher failure rates in implementation of strategies, more attention should be given by executives to implementing the strategy. Several reasons are frequently offered for the failure of implementing strategy.

Factors that affect strategy implementation can be categorized as leadership style, information availability and accuracy, uncertainty, organizational structure, organizational culture, human resources, and technology (Rani, 2019; Samuel & Siebeneck, 2019). Although most authors agree that these factors affect strategy implementation, each factor's impact is at a different level and carries a different force (Obeidat, Al-Hadidi & Tarhini, 2017). Successful strategic plan implementation depends on the selection and conversion of an appropriate strategy into action. Jooste and Fourie (2016) views implementations of strategy in terms of a five-step process of envision, activate, install, ensure, and recognize. He further observes that strategic plan implementation is recognized as a major management challenge with difficulty in knowing which aspects above often fail or contribute less to the implementation effectiveness (Strøm, Willumsen, Oehmen & Heck, 2018).

Activities effectively putting plans to work generally constitute implementation tactics that drive the strategy of the company and are successful when congruence is achieved between several elements crucial to the implementation process. These elements are structures defining a company and its relationship with parts and process elements like leadership, culture, resources and other administrative procedures. Hieu and Nwachukwu (2019) points out that while structure follows strategy, there is also evidence that structure influences strategy in certain situations. The structure should be compatible and congruent with a chosen strategy. Successful strategy implementation has been explored in the dimensions of "soft" and "hard" factors (Ansoff & McDonnell, 2015). The hard and soft elements need to fit together with the soft elements being the behaviours, while the hard elements comprise the analytical dimensions to the process of making and implementation of the strategy. The author contends a strategic fit between soft and hard elements and organizational variables is paramount.

During implementation, every member must offer his or her support for the successful implementation of the strategic plan, with the top office involved right from the beginning to provide adequate leadership. This ensures a united and directed organization's efforts towards the achievement of its goals (Pessot, Zangiacomi, Battistella, Rocchi, Sala & Sacco, 2020). A

complete buy-in with positive reception and plan implementation into daily activities greatly increases the likelihood for generalized and uniform process. Repeating the plan, its elements and ways to measure its success, creates a better opportunity for the employees to undertake its implementation as part of their daily work lives (Frank, Dalenogare & Ayala, 2019). Employees need be aware of the measurement and reward systems in event of significant achievements. Support and belief in the plan is thus increased by this positive reinforcement, which enhances belief in its possibilities and outcomes (Ghobakhloo, 2018).

The manufacturing sector serves both the local market and East African region (Kihara 2017). The sector, which is dominated by subsidiaries of multinational corporations, contributes to an average of 15% towards the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) it is also able to generate foreign revenue through export and diversification of the country's economy (Mwanje, 2017). Kenya has a vibrant manufacturing industry, which offers a variety of products. According to Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM, 2018), the industry continues to grow since the late 1990s despite challenges in the operating environment.

## 1.2 Statement of the problem

The manufacturing industry is very important in maintaining the growth and development of the economy; it also creates jobs and alleviates poverty (Mailu, Ntale & Ngui, 2018). On average, however, manufacturing has been growing at a slower price than the economy (KAM, 2019). This implies that the share of manufacturing in GDP has actually been minimizing with time. Further, an organizations ability to implement its strategy successfully is a result of its ability to overcome obstacles leading to poor strategy implementation (Njeri, 2017). Although formulating a consistent strategy is a difficult task for any management team, making that strategy work implementing it throughout the organization is further difficult. A myriad of factors can potentially affect the process by which strategic plans are turned into organizational action. Unlike strategy formulation, strategy implementation is often seen as something craft, rather than a science, and its research history has previously been described as fragmented and eclectic.

Fewer researches have focused on factors affecting strategic plan implementation like Rajasekar (2017), who focused on factors affecting effective strategy implementation in a service industry. One important conclusion of this study was that strategy implementation cannot be studied in isolation from the country, industry, or organizational culture and environment. Speculand (2016) addressed bridging the strategy implementation skills gap and his findings reflected that leaders need both the ability to craft the right strategy and skills to implement it. Other researchers such as Teresa, Kenneth and Mwamisha (2019), focused on factors affecting effective implementation of strategic plans in non-governmental organizations in Kenya. Maxwell, Kepha and Joseph (2018) focused on the factors affecting effective strategy implementation for the attainment of Millenium Development Goal 5 by international reproductive health non-governmental organizations in Kenya. Messah and Paul (2017) researched on factors affecting implementation of strategic plans in government tertiary institutions. To bridge the gap, this study investigated the factors influencing the implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms in Nairobi County.

### 1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study was to determine the factors influencing the implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms in Nairobi County.

- i. To determine the effect of strategic innovation on implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms in Nairobi County
- ii. To analyze the effect of strategic leadership on implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms in Nairobi County
- iii. To determine the effect of organizational culture on implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms in Nairobi County

### 1.4 Research Hypotheses

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Strategic Innovation has no significant effect on implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms in Nairobi County

**H<sub>02</sub>:** Strategic leadership has no significant effect on implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms in Nairobi County

**H<sub>03</sub>:** Organizational culture has no significant effect on implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms in Nairobi County

### 2.1 Literature Review

#### 2.2 Theoretical Review: Contingency theory

Contingency theory is a class of behavioral theory that claims that there is no best way to organize a firm, to lead a company, or to make decisions. Instead, the optimal course of action is contingent (dependent) upon the internal and external situations. Contingency theory (Johnsen, 2005) states that complex organizations use performance measurement to reduce uncertainty and for legitimacy. Contingency theory seeks to formulate broad generalizations about the formal structures that are typically associated with or best fit the use of different technologies (McAdam, Miller & McSorley, 2019). The perspective originated with the work of Joan Woodward in 1958 who argued that technologies directly determine differences in such organizational attributes as span of control, centralization of authority, and the formalization of rules and procedures. Proponents of this theory argue that the best way to organize depends on the nature of the environment to which the organization must relate (Alexander, 2017).

Organizations are open systems that need careful management to satisfy and balance internal needs and to adapt to environmental circumstances (Donaldson, 2001). There is no one best way of organizing. The appropriate form depends on the kind of task or environment one is dealing with. Management must therefore be concerned, above all else, with achieving alignments and good fits. Different types of organizations are needed in different types of environments. In this paper, contingency theory was applicable in emphasizing on the environment in which strategic planning adoption and implementation take place. In order to affect performance of small manufacturing companies, the environmental factors that influence strategic planning and implementation must be taken into consideration.

## 2.3 Empirical Literature

### 2.3.1 Strategic Innovation and Implementation of Strategic Plans

Strategic innovation involves the implementation of new organizational methods in the firm's business practices, workplace organization or external relations (Barasa, Knobon, Vermeulen, Kimuyu & Kinyanjui, 2017). Firms with scarce and important complementary capabilities are often the ones that profit the most from innovation activities, whether they moved first in performing the innovation activities or were followers. Having important scarce complementary capabilities is one of the hallmarks of exploiters (Sibanda & Ramrathan, 2017). Jacobs (2019) recognized three important subroutines of successful innovation: the strategic and implementation subroutine and the feedback or learning subroutine. In order to have a successful innovation routine, all of these have to be present and related to one another. In most approaches to innovation, the organization's strategy provides no more than the general framework. However, in order to realize repeated successful innovation, there has to be a direct link between innovation and strategy. Innovation is then necessary to realize the strategic objectives of the organization. Information systems support the decision making process through the quality and quantity of information available for executives to use in decision making (Rajasekar, 2018).

Comparison between traditional information and innovation information, reveals that traditional information is relevant to known facts while innovation information is concerned with future innovation outcomes (Fawzy, 2014). While innovation is defined as the commercial exploitation of a new idea or invention, the process of innovation refers to the temporal sequence of events that occur as people interact with others to develop and implement their innovation ideas within an institutional context (Herzog, 2011). Innovation begins with signs of changes in the organizational environment. The major challenges faced by institutions are related to the comprehension of the factors that are behind them and the development of appropriate response strategies. The selection and adoption of innovation is a fundamental process of strategy implementation. The continued growth of the importance of innovation is also related with capacity to make changes in competitive position of firms. Thus, innovation and strategy implementation are complementary and feed on each other (Kelchetermans & Beule, 2018).

Innovations must be speeded up continuously in order to obtain more profit from the investment and to achieve more benefit from a fast product introduction thereby increasing competitive advantage (Cândido & Santos, 2018). To achieve this goal, it is necessary that agreement should be realized on desired results and the expected benefits. The methods and the opportunities of achieving this goal should be clear in advance to all those involved. Although every innovation is different, the rules and processes should be similar for every innovation within the company. Aiming at a moving target will cause higher costs, will delay the process and will lower the quality of the result (Rani, 2019). Greater innovation can occur within acceptable levels of risk. Risk management should always be built into the innovative process.

### 2.3.2 Strategic Leadership and Implementation of Strategic Plans

Momanyi and Juma (2015) conducted a study on effect of strategic leadership on strategy implementation energy parastatals in Kenya. The study adopted descriptive survey research design and data was collected through well designed questionnaires and was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study found out that strategic leadership had a positive influence on strategy implementation in the Energy Sector Parastatals in Kenya. The study also established that leaders working as a team with other staff in the organization are likely to execute their

<https://doi.org/10.53819/81018102t2045>

organizational strategies successfully and free flow of all communication between employees in the organization can help in the execution of strategy successfully and lastly motivation of employees helps to achieve successful implementation of the strategy.

According to Samuel and Siebeneck, (2019), while a well-formulated strategy, a strong and effective pool of skills, and human capital are extremely important resources for strategy success, poor leadership is one of the main obstacles in successful implementation of strategic plans. Therefore, the need for effective leadership outweighs any other factor. Beer and Eisenstat (2016) addressed this issue from a different perspective; they suggested that in the absence of effective leadership, conflicting priorities would result in poor coordination because employees will suspect that top management prefers to avoid potentially threatening and embarrassing circumstances. Coordination of activities, streamlining of processes, aligning the organizational structure, and keeping employees motivated and committed to implementation of strategic plans are key responsibilities of the leadership.

Matthias and Sascha (2018) identified the role of the board, which is to ensure consistency among resource allocation, processes, and the firm's intended strategy. Zaribaf and Bayrami (2016) categorized the leaderships importance into three key roles: managing the strategic process, managing relationships, and managing manager training. Similarly, Ansari's (2016) study on just-in-time purchasing concluded that the commitment and leadership of top-level management is essential in Implementation of Strategic Plans. In a study involving Zimbabwe's state-owned enterprises, Mapetere, Mavhiki, Tonderai, Sikomwe, and Mhonde (2012) found that relatively low leadership involvement in Implementation of Strategic Plans led to partial strategy success in the organization studied. According to White (2014), the responsibility of formulating and implementing the strategy lies largely on leaders of an organization. Leaders are the ones who decide what must be done, and then actually figure out how it is going to be done. Meyer and Botha (2015) reiterates the aspect of leaders having a skill set that allows them to analyze the opportunities and the threats that may exist, both currently and going forward, and thereafter having the ability to analyze the resources and abilities that an organization possesses to deal with those opportunities and threats (Harrison, 2014).

### **2.3.2 Organizational Culture and Implementation of Strategic Plans**

Every organization has a distinctive style of addressing issues and this distinctiveness is shaped by organizational culture (Vijayakumar & Padma, 2014). Culture is manifested almost everywhere in an organization, if we know where to look for it. It is reflected in the words and language people use in communicating with one another. It is also manifested in the artifacts that are in (and on display in) the company's facilities. Sometimes, the culture of a company is obvious and clearly visible, as in the treatment we receive as customers and the artifacts we see that support this focus on customer service. A company's culture is subtler and needs to be 'read' (Flamholtz & Randle, 2018).

Obeidat, Al-Hadidi and Tarhini (2017) states that culture is an abstraction, yet the forces that are created in social and organizational situations deriving from culture are powerful. If individuals do not understand the operation of these forces, they become victim to them. Cultural forces are powerful because they operate outside individuals' awareness. The author further categorizes organizational culture into three levels: (1) Artifacts which include visible and feeble structures and processes, and observed behavior which is difficult to decipher; (2) Espoused beliefs and

values which include ideas, goals, values, aspirations, ideologies and rationalizations; (3) Basic underlying assumptions such as unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs and values.

Saunders et al. (2018) inferred that implementing new strategy requires making changes in taken-for-granted assumptions and routines that are elements of culture. Organizational culture underpins success in implementation. An initiative that matches the culture of an organization can ensure a rapid and successful implementation. According to Katsioloudes (2019), culture of an organization is largely about the way things are done. The relationship to strategy implementation is that, individuals think it is, fairly easy to grasp. If the organization's strategic direction is one that is rather longstanding and successful, odds are that the culture that has evolved is appropriate to the organization's needs. It may not necessarily be the ideal culture, but at least it would seem to have satisfied its strategic purpose.

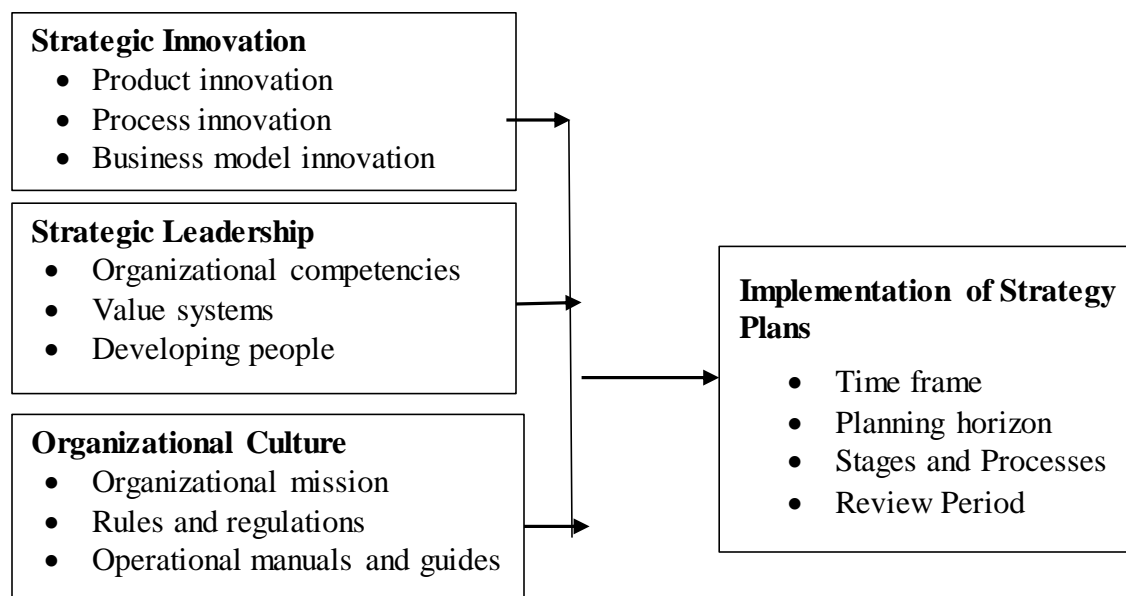
Culture determines output of the organization more than any other factor including education and skill of people working in the organization. It is because of this factor that organizational culture must be considered in any effort toward strategic planning. Strategic planning for a particular organizational culture is possible only if the future direction is either consistent with that culture and the direction it is heading, or the culture feels such pressure on its possible continuation that it is willing to break its past in order to have a future at all (Strøm, Willumsen, Oehmen & Heck, 2018).

A stable organizational culture will enhance commitment among employees and focus on productivity within the organization rather than resistance to rules and regulations or external factors that prohibit success (Neuert, 2014). As a system of shared meaning, it is a critical variable for effective strategy process. Hofstede concluded that organizational culture is a soft, holistic concept with, however, presumed hard consequences. An organization's collective culture influences both the attitudes and subsequent behaviors of its employees as well as the level of performance the organization achieves (Neuert, 2014).

## **2.4 Conceptual Framework**

Conceptual framework is a diagrammatical representation that shows the relationship between dependent and independent variables. Figure 1 depicts the relationship between factors influencing implementation of strategic plans such as strategic innovation, strategic leadership, organization culture and implementation of strategic plans.





**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

### 3.1 Research Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design which, according to Kothari (2004) is structured to examine a number of logical sub-units or units of analysis within organizations. Orodho (2003) acknowledges the importance of descriptive design especially when the intent is gaining broader understanding of the context of the research and processes being enacted. The study targeted 50 small manufacturing firms in Nairobi County. Purposive sampling was used to select a manager and supervisor in each of the small manufacturing firms. Thus, a sample size of 100 respondents was used. A multiple regression analysis was used to establish the relationship between institutional factors and the implementation of strategic plans. The statistical software, SPSS was used to analyze the quantitative data and the results were presented in tables to provide a clear picture of the study findings.

### 4.1 Results and Findings

The study administered 100 questionnaires. A total 96 questionnaires were filled and returned with a response rate of 86%. According to and Kothari (2004), a response rate of above 50% is adequate for a descriptive study. Thus, the response rate of 96% under this study was very good for study.

### 4.3 Regression Analysis

The study sought to carry out regression analysis to establish the statistical significance relationship between strategic innovation, strategic leadership and organization culture on implementation of strategic plans. The results presented in Table 2 present the regression model in explaining the study phenomena.

**Table 2: Regression Outputs**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.825a	0.681	0.672	0.4702	
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	66.926	3	16.732	75.664	.000b
Residual	31.4	93	0.221		
Total	98.327	96			
Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.638	0.195		3.275	0.001
Strategic innovation	0.295	0.081	0.308	3.628	0.000
Strategic leadership	0.160	0.077	0.174	2.076	0.040
Organization culture	0.156	0.072	0.169	2.166	0.032

The variables strategic innovation, strategic leadership and organization culture were found to be satisfactory variables in explaining implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms. This is supported by coefficient of determination also known as the R square of 0.681. This means that strategic innovation, strategic leadership and organization culture explain 68.1% of the variations in the dependent variable, which is implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms. This results further means that the model applied to link the relationship of the variables was satisfactory. The findings further confirm that the regression model is significant and supported by  $F=75.664$ ,  $p<0.000$ ) since p-values was 0.000 which is less than 0.05. The study conducted a regression of coefficient analysis to establish the statistical significance relationship between the independents variables strategic innovation, strategic leadership and organization culture on the dependent variable that was implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms.

The constant of 0.638 showed that when strategic innovation, strategic leadership and organization culture are held constant, implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms remain at 0.638 units. The regression of coefficients results show that strategic innovation and implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms is positively and significantly related ( $\beta=0.295$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). Strategic leadership and implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms is positively and significantly related ( $\beta=0.160$ ,  $p=0.040$ ). Lastly, results showed that organization culture and implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms is positively and significantly related ( $\beta=0.156$ ,  $p=0.032$ ).

The fitted model was;

$$Y = 0.638 + 0.295X_1 + 0.160X_2 + 0.156X_3$$

Where:

Y = Implementation of strategic plans,  $X_1$  = Strategic innovation,  $X_2$  = Strategic leadership,  $X_3$  = Organization culture,  $\beta_{1...3}$ = Coefficients of the variables

<https://doi.org/10.53819/81018102t2045>

The first objective was to determine the effect of strategic innovation on implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms in Nairobi County. The regression of coefficients results show that that strategic innovation and implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms is positively and significantly related. This implies that a unitary increase in strategic innovation leads to increase in implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms holding other factors constant. The null hypothesis was rejected that strategic innovation has no significant effect on implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms in Nairobi County. The findings are consistent with Jacobs (2014) that there is a direct link between innovation and strategy. Innovation is necessary to realize the strategic objectives of the organization. Information systems support the decision making process through the quality and quantity of information available for executives to use in decision making.

The second objective was to determine the effect of strategic leadership on implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms in Nairobi County. The regression of coefficients results show that that strategic leadership and implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms is positively and significantly related. This implies that a unitary increase in strategic leadership leads to increase in implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms holding other factors constant. The null hypothesis was rejected that strategic leadership has no significant effect on implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms in Nairobi County. The findings are consistent with Momanyi and Juma (2015) whose study found out that strategic leadership had a positive influence on strategy implementation. The study also established that leaders working as a team with other staff in the organization are likely to execute their organizational strategies successfully and free flow of all communication between employees in the organization can help in the execution of strategy successfully and lastly motivation of employees helps to achieve successful implementation of the strategy. The strategic leadership is expected to determine a strategic direction, emphasize ethical practices in exploiting and maintaining core competencies, establish balanced organizational controls, sustain an effective organizational culture, develop human capital and develop social capital. These are key responsibilities that coordinate all units and elements of an organization and determine its operation.

The third objective was to determine the effect of organizational culture on implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms in Nairobi County. The regression of coefficients results show that that organizational culture and implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms is positively and significantly related. This implies that a unitary increase in organizational culture leads to increase in implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms holding other factors constant. The null hypothesis was rejected that organizational culture has no significant effect on implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms in Nairobi County. The findings are consistent with (Neuert, 2014) whose findings indicated that an organization's collective culture influences both the attitudes and subsequent behaviors of its employees as well as the level of performance the organization achieves.

## **5.1 Conclusion**

The study concluded that strategic innovation is a key determinant of implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms. Under strategic innovation, the skills acquired contribute to the creation of new ideas and firms with scarce and important capabilities profit the most from

innovation activities in the small manufacturing firms. The study concluded strategic leadership affect the effectiveness of implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms. Strategic leadership provides leadership that impact positively on the implementation of strategic plans. Similarly, key players in the overall management of the organization significantly influence the implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms.

The study concluded that organizational culture has a positive and significant effect on implementation of strategic plans in small manufacturing firms. A progressive culture, one that will systematically support strategy implementation, is one that fosters a culture of partnership, unity, teamwork and cooperation among employees. This type of culture will enhance commitment among employees and focus on productivity within the organization rather than resistance to rules and regulations or external factors that prohibit success. When culture aligns with strategy implementation, an organization is able to more efficiently operate in the global marketplace. Culture allows organizational leaders to work both individually and as teams to develop strategic initiatives within the organization.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

The study recommends that the small manufacturing firms' should understand the role organization culture play in management of organizations. They should be in a position to build a culture that is aligned to the strategic plans that they adopt. The small manufacturing firms' managers should also develop strategic leadership to coordinate all the other resources to attain the desired goals. It is the strategic leadership that determines success or failure of a strategic plan. Although they small, strategic leadership is critical to transform them into large manufacturing firms' in the future through well thought strategic planning. The study further recommended that training and development should be an integral part of each organization's strategy to effective implementation.

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