

Organizational Performance as an Outcome of Strategic Leadership in the Context of Selected Churches Affiliated with Evangelical Alliance of Kenya

¹Emmanuel Otieno Ouma & ²Janet Muthimi

^{1,2}Department of Business Administration, Kenyatta University

Corresponding Email: oumaotieno9@students.ku.ac.ke

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine how strategic leadership affects the performance of churches affiliated with the Evangelical Alliance of Kenya (EAK) by establishing the relationship between balanced organizational controls as an aspect of strategic leadership and the performance of churches affiliated with the EAK in Nairobi City County. The research design that was considered entailed a mixed-method approach that utilized a descriptive survey research design to investigate a sample size of 153 participants to help with the study. Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered using semi-structured questionnaires administered by respondents, including leaders, pastors, administrators, and personnel in churches affiliated with EAK. A pilot study that involved 16 respondents from Agape Fellowship Church was considered to establish the reliability using the Cronbach alpha value of above 0.7 as the acceptable threshold. The study determined validity of the data collection instrument. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics techniques and presented in tables and figures, whereas qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis. The findings of this study revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between organizational performance and balanced organizational controls. Regression analysis indicates that balanced organizational controls collectively explain 52.8 percent of the variance in organizational performance. The study concludes that strategic leadership significantly influences the performance of churches affiliated with EAK. Therefore, drawing from the findings, recommendations have been fronted for strategic management to leverage this study's findings to comprehend balanced organizational controls, involving long-term focus, alignment of processes with goals, and continuous monitoring significantly contribute to improved performance in EAK-affiliated churches.

Keywords: *Balanced organizational controls, strategy, strategic leadership, organizational performance*

1.0 Introduction

There is a rising concern for entities to embrace frameworks that can match the escalating rivalry in the global arena. Strategy implementation is a core competitive process for all effective entities to meet their objectives, considering their capability to promote organizational performance. Golensky and Hager (2020) establish that organizational performance is the level to which an entity has effectively met its anticipated goals. Kaplan (2005) also defined organizational performance as a framework of financial and non-financial interrelated measures that show the degree of achievement of projected goals. Undeniably, strategic implementation is a critical aspect in fulfilling an entity's looked-for goals and objectives.

Amason and Ward (2020) reiterate that diminished performances of organizational initiatives in a dynamic business environment are because of insufficient implementation efforts of the strategies formulated. A theory enhances a study. It demonstrates its relationship with the variables being studied in that it could either support or challenge the study's hypothesis. While explaining his model of "McKinsey 7S," James McKinsey established that 90 percent of entities demonstrate reduced performance because of failing to implement their strategies successfully as projected (Kaplan, 2005). McKinney's 7s model demonstrates how leaders can effectively ensure strategy implementation by organizing around the integration of seven fundamental factors: structure, systems, strategy, staff, skills, style, and shared values.

Organizational performance is the ultimate output of an organization that meets its goals or objectives and the environment in which it operates. However, there are several conceptualizations of performance in strategic management. Golensky and Hager (2020) indicate that organizational performance entails diverse factors and indicators that demonstrate the organization's overall health, effectiveness, and efficiency. Hambrick and Wowak (2021) indicate that organizational performance can be examined by determining what recognizes, constitutes, communicates success factors, and presents a place for evaluation and rewards. Organizational performance is also measured in terms of the institution's potential to fulfill its goals and by maximizing the existing resources effectively and efficiently.

Strategic leadership is the potential of people or more leaders within an entity to effectively navigate and guide it in a forward-looking and purposeful manner for its sustainability (Samini, Cortes, Anderson, & Hermann, 2022). Hambrick and Wowak (2021) explain strategic leadership as the act of the organization making determinations and setting a clear direction that is consistent with its mission, vision, and long-standing goals while consistently monitoring the implementation within some dynamic internal and external contexts. Amason and Ward (2020) consider strategic leadership as an approach to synchronizing leaders' inputs with an organization's general responsibility and accountability, such as management and administration team, executives, and board of directors (BODs), to implement their objectives. Kadzo and Muthimi (2023) have stressed the importance of strategic leadership emphasizing that organizations should stick to a top-down approach to leadership in enhancing accountability which is also applicable in churches.

1.1 Problem Statement

Churches have generally attracted big numbers in membership in Kenya based on the advent of media technologies and tools, innovation through programs and events, and knowledge awareness. Dada et al. (2021) report that some churches have realized a 100 percent increase in their membership every two years, attracting new challenges and opportunities. It has been challenging for church organizations to translate strategies into actions, more or less, their strategic plans to results. The level of events and programs executed in churches affiliated with EAK may not compare with the mainstream churches like Catholics and Anglicans that design, plan, and execute the same programs.

Odhiambo, Awuor and Wambua (2022) note the shifting trend of churches from non-profits to ventures that bring profits invested in outreach programs and church events. In Kenya, several churches have been indicted for commercialization of faith and not sticking to their goals of serving the community since 2014 (Amason & Ward, 2020). Churches like Neno Evangelism, Helicopter Ministries, Maximum Miracles, and Finger of God have experienced devastating losses after being featured for exploitation and crises between 2015 and 2022. Even if the crises do not attract national attention, they cost the churches their reputation and viability to the

community. 11 churches in Kenya have been deregistered and banned from operation due to over-exploitation and mismanaging the congregants between 2018 and 2023 (Matini, Gesimba, & Mwangi, 2019).

Churches are presently considering proper management approaches and corporate structures guided by national policies to make them effective in their ventures, such as schools, colleges, hospitals and restaurants (Matini, Gesimba, & Mwangi, 2019). Despite the efforts to create strategic plans, there are uncompleted goals, unexpected outputs, and poor utilization of resources. A study in 2020 on Pentecostal churches revealed that 40 percent of the value they project through their strategic plans is barely attained (Samini et al., 2022). Evidence abounds as hindrances to strategic implementation complicate the attainment of sustained performance among the churches (Kowo & Akinbola, 2019). Thus, through strategic leadership, churches affiliated with EAK can better utilize and maximize their resources and potential as anticipated.

Strategy implementation as a dynamic aspect of strategy should be highly regarded by churches affiliated with EAK, as these institutions are surrounded by complexity, change, instability, and vulnerability. In that way, churches can be greatly advantaged regarding their impact, efficiency, and general performance in the communities if they implement their strategies with utmost diligence. Ogalo (2019) warns that strategy formulation singly is never sufficient for churches to be successful in the current volatile environment, but they also need to convert the formulated strategies into actions. Weak strategic leadership is detrimental to even the rigorous of strategies. However, aggressive implementation of even an un-thought plan can result in success.

The deterioration in national economic production has unfavorably impacted several churches. The findings of Dada et al. (2021) reveal several stalled development programs in churches because they have been unable to fulfill their primary financial mandates. The church must offer salaries to their employees, address the communities' needs, and run their church programs, which need funds (González-Rodríguez, Martin-Samper, Koseoglu, & Okumus, 2019). There are also significant shifts in how the churches fund their projects. Ogalo (2019) reveals that donor funding from the West financial and material help from mother churches has declined remarkably. Churches have been left with the option of raising funds from their members. Thus, resource mobilization and strategic leadership are a serious challenge for the church. Technological advancements, equipment, and other church resources have improved the effectiveness of the churches but also created new challenges that need strategic leadership to solve.

1.2 Research Objectives

1.2.1 General objective

The general objective of the study was to examine the effect of strategic leadership on performance of churches affiliated with EAK in Nairobi City County.

1.2.2 Specific objectives

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

- i. To examine the effect of core competencies on the performance of churches affiliated with the EAK in Nairobi City County.
- ii. To determine the effect of sustaining organizational culture on the performance of churches affiliated with the EAK in Nairobi City County.
- iii. To reveal the effect of establishing balanced organizational controls on the performance of churches affiliated with the EAK in Nairobi City County.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

The study relied on the postulates of the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) model which was initially introduced by Robert Kaplan and David Norton in 1990, proposing that organizational performance can be examined as guided by diverse performance measures (Quesado, Aibar Guzman, & Lima Rodrigues, 2018). The model offers a balanced measure by exploring the organization as guided by four perspectives including customer satisfaction, learning growth, financial, and internal processes (Fatima & Elbanna, 2020). It further postulates that an organization should consider various operational measures while determining its performance, and not just concentrating on entirely financial measures. Simply put, performance may not just be defined by the financial measures in an organization.

The financial perspective has to do with profits, return on investment, cash flow, etc. The customer perspective considers the organization's potential to retain more clients and retain them based on satisfaction levels. Internal processes include process efficiency, order accomplishment time, quality rate, etc. (Aryani & Setiawan, 2020). Lastly, the learning and growth perspective concentrates on how the organization continues to create and enhance its value by ensuring employee fulfillment, innovation rate, training and development chances, low turnover levels, etc. By monitoring and measuring metrics across these four perspectives, organizations can obtain a more holistic view of their performance and ensure that they are not overly focusing on one area at the expense of others.

Quesado, Aibar Guzman, and Lima Rodrigues (2018) commend BSC for its holistic approach to examining organizational performance, which includes financial and nonfinancial metrics. This allows organizations to assess performance from multiple dimensions rather than relying solely on financial indicators. There is also strategy alignment when applying the model, as the organization matches the daily operations with the long-term strategy. This also allows for a concentration of leading indicators rather than just lagging indicators like financial outcomes. Leading indicators are customer satisfaction (church members) and efficacy in the internal processes that project future performance. On the other hand, Aryani and Setiawan (2020) criticize the BSC model for its complexity, especially when the leaders do not clearly understand the commitment to deliver real value. It can sometimes be a bureaucratic exercise that overemphasizes too much on measurement and not sufficient on real performance or outcomes.

The dependent variable (organizational performance) in this study is anchored on the BSC model. From the financial perspective, church organizations would consider their financial contributions to events and offerings. The BSC proposes profits, ROI, and cash flows to be the components of the financial perspective. Thus, the cash flows inform tithes and offerings, and different contributions constitute the financial perspective in churches. The customer perspective entails the perceptions of members about the services and how they are satisfied and motivated to participate in church activities. Internal processes entail the effectiveness of internal operations and processes in supporting the church's mission (Quesado, Aibar Guzman, & Lima Rodrigues, 2018). This also includes the effectiveness of service schedules, effective communication channels, and the number of volunteers and members willing to engage in church activities. The learning and growth perspective encompasses the church reinforcing growth, learning, and development among its leaders and volunteers. The BSC model examines how the church organizes training sessions for their leader and works, presents spiritual growth

programs, and engages the members in missions. In that way, it is clear how BSC demonstrates the financial and nonfinancial measures of evaluating the performance of church organizations.

2.2 Empirical Review

Nabella et al. (2022) studied how leadership and organizational culture influenced governance at Senior High School in Batam City. The study's objective was to explore how school management can maximize their core competencies to enhance organizational climate and governance. The study uses a survey method to investigate 178 individuals utilizing a mixed research method. The study found that leadership and organizational culture directly affected the climate and governance of the employees in Senior High School. It also established that organizations could focus on their core competencies internally as these generate unique abilities that distinguish them from their rivals and produce a stable revenue. The study was specific to the education sector and thus findings may not apply to the context of the church. The current study focused its application on the church setup.

Oluoch, K'Aol and Koshal (2021) investigated how balanced organizational controls (BOC) affected the financial sustainability of NGOs in Kenya. The study utilized a descriptive research approach to examine a sample size of 413 respondents drawn from 6,028 published NGOs in Kenya. A positive correlation existed between strategic, financial, and feedback controls and the financial stability of NGOs in Nairobi County. Nonetheless, the study concentrated on the relationship between BOC and financial sustainability. It did not specifically investigate how BOC influences non-financial measures of performance. The study was not specific to a sector but to NGOs and may thus not be inferred in the present study context. Therefore, contextual and conceptual gaps were recognized in the study.

Fatima and Elbanna (2020) were keen to conceptualize a balanced scorecard to understand the organizational control in the hospital and tourism sectors. The objective of the scholars was to address the gaps that presently hinder BSC development in the hospital and tourism sectors. They utilized a systematic literature review process to build on the relevant theoretical scholarly workers to conceptualize the application of BSC in the organizational control of the hospitality sector. The study's outcome was that sustainability should be included in BSC implementation and efforts to align the organization's performance against the overall strategy. The study was theoretically based and thus needed to be more empirically based.

Ogalo (2019) investigated the relationship between strategy implementation and faith-based organizations' (FBOs) performance. The study examined strategic resources, organizational structure, and operating procedures as components of strategic implementation that influence the overall performance of FBOs. The author utilized a descriptive case research design and a census survey that targeted 71 respondents who engaged with the research tool. The study determined that strategic resources predicted performance, operating procedures, and organizational culture. The study established a positive and significant relationship between strategy implementation and FBO performance. The study relied on descriptive statistics that challenge the generality of results and interpretations to the population. The current study also included inferential statistics, realizing that descriptive statistics can only be utilized to describe the target population under the study.

Channuwong, Snongtaweepon, Harnphanich, Benjawatanapon, Katangchol, Vongsurakrai, and Kongyoungyune (2023) undertook exploratory research to determine the impact of creative leadership on organization performance using the BSC model. While examining 370 participants, including administrators, employees, and general and departmental managers, the researchers determined how creative leadership affected the performance of public limited

entities in Bangkok. The study's uniqueness was that it utilized the balanced scorecard as a framework for anchoring its constructs, synthesizing the application of the theory. The study used a descriptive research approach to investigate its objectives. The tenets of creative leadership, including vision, creativity, adaptability, problem-solving skills, integrity, and motivation, are examined against organizational performance. The study determined that creative leadership is significantly and positively linked with the performance of public limited entities in Bangkok. Nonetheless, the study was conducted in a profit-making context and concentrated on performance generally, not capturing the nonprofit metrics. It neglected the probable moderating variables that influenced the association of the independent and dependent study variables.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 shows the study's conceptual framework which shows the interrelation between the independent variable and the dependent variable.

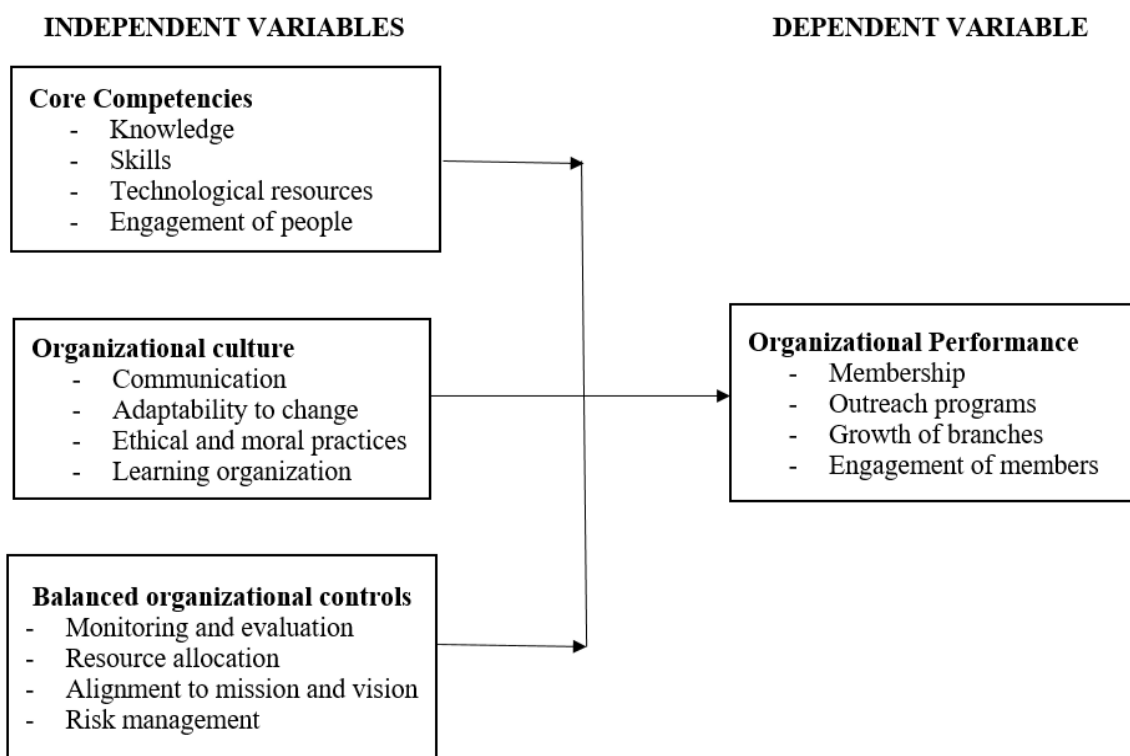


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3.0 Methodology

In the current study, the researchers utilized a descriptive research design which helped in data collection from the sample population. Harris, Holyfield, Jones, Ellis, and Neal (2019) illustrate that the methodology presents a comprehensive and precise picture of a specific phenomenon being investigated without manipulating the constructs or establishing causal relationships. The descriptive research design used presented a comprehensive analysis instead of just the breadth of the study.

The target population included team leaders and staff members of evangelical churches within Nairobi that are directly involved in the strategy formulation and execution. All the selected churches had a strategic plan and other annual ministry plans highlighting projects, activities,

and initiatives being undertaken to realize their objectives. The population of leaders targeted was approximately 246 in 10 churches randomly selected, who were eligible participants with representative information for the research. The variable measurement was founded on qualitative and quantitative measures in a singular study, constituting a mixed-method approach. The approach was appropriate since it coherently but separately tackled exploratory and confirmatory aspects, creating in-depth information that may need to be sufficiently addressed by independently relying on quantitative or qualitative methods (Pandey & Pandey, 2021). A simple regression model demonstrating the relationship between the variables for a statistical analysis was determined. The model encompassed balanced organizational control being regressed with organizational performance as shown below:

$$\text{Performance} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Balanced organization control} + \varepsilon$$

The study utilized questionnaires to gather primary data from participants. The tool was a semi-structured questionnaire. The study collected quantitative data using closed-ended questions that had a Likert scale of strongly disagree (1) to agree (5) strongly. Qualitative data was obtained using open-ended questions. Secondary data was collected from reports, strategic plans, and other published documents to validate and complement the primary data obtained directly from respondents.

The researcher considered a pilot study to determine the validity and reliability of the data collection tool. Expert, construct, and face validity were considered in this study. This was ensured by critical examination of every item of the research instrument to guarantee responses that addressed the study's research questions. Experts in strategic management department analyzed the research tool using a systematic technical audit and made their opinions, recommendations, and criticisms allowed for its improvement.

An approval letter authorizing the study was obtained from the Kenyatta University's Graduate School to give headway for data collection while permission was further sought from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) to authorize data collection from the expected participants. The questionnaire was incorporated into Microsoft Forms to be administered online and hand-delivered to individual church leaders after booking an appointment with them. The questionnaires were given to the participants and picked up after two weeks. The data were gathered from the selected churches affiliated with EAK from 15th October to 15th November 2023.

4.0 Results and Discussion

Responses were obtained from 109 respondents (constituting 71.24) percent, whereas 46 sample respondents (28.76 percent) did not participate in the study. The response rate is deemed sufficient for fulfilling the research objectives, as Sekaran and Bougie (2019) propose that 60 percent is considered a good response rate, while 70 percent is a very good one.

4.1 Descriptive statistics

The analysis incorporated descriptive measures, encompassing means, standard deviation, and percentages. These descriptive measures were aligned with the study's objectives, specifically aimed at assessing the influence of balanced organizational control (as a component of strategic leadership) on the performance of EAK-affiliated churches in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

4.1.1 Balanced organizational controls

The results of descriptive analysis for balanced organizational controls were presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Balanced organizational controls

Balanced organizational controls	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std Dev
Plans and activities are monitored and evaluated frequently	109	1.00	5.00	3.1193	1.32445
Monitoring funds allocation to activities and ministries	109	1.00	5.00	3.0734	1.51966
Processes are aligned with intended goals of the church	109	1.00	5.00	3.2661	1.51317
Risk management and proportionate mitigation plans	109	1.00	5.00	3.7982	.99796
Aggregate scores				3.3143	1.33881

As indicated in Table 1, the aggregate mean score on balanced organizational control in churches affiliated with EAK in Nairobi City County, Kenya is 3.3143. There was also varying opinions on different aspects of BOC as reflected by the high average standard deviation of 1.33881. The highest mean of 3.7982, with a relatively low standard deviation of .99796, was realized in the idea of risk anticipation and management. This was followed by participants agreeing on churches' alignment to their vision and mission, registering a mean of 3.2661 with a high standard deviation of 1.51317. Subsequently, the church's constant monitoring and evaluation of plans and activities registered a mean score of 3.1193 and a high standard deviation of 1.32445. Lastly, the lowest mean of 3.0734 in this category with a standard deviation of 1.51966 was realized in a suggestion that churches had a framework for enabling their resource allocation.

4.1.2 Organizational Performance

The results of descriptive analysis for organizational performance are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Organizational Performance

Organizational performance					
Involvement, satisfaction, and impact on members	109	1.00	5.00	2.6330	1.20693
Engagement of church leaders in training programs	109	1.00	5.00	2.8716	1.13937
Outreach programs impacting on the community needs	109	1.00	5.00	3.1284	1.61647
Growth of church members and financial contributions	109	1.00	5.00	3.1835	1.55852
Aggregate Scores				2.9541	1.38032

As indicated in Table 2, organizational performance was emphasized in churches affiliated with EAK in Nairobi City County, Kenya to a moderate extent as evidenced by a mean of 2.9541. A low standard deviation of 1.38032 demonstrates that most of the study participants acknowledged that performance was a factor in churches affiliated with EAK. Furthermore, the results showed that growth of church membership and financial contributions had the highest mean score of 3.1835, demonstrating the expansion endeavors of churches. This was followed by the impact of outreach programs with a mean of 3.1284, and engagement of members in leadership training programs as evidenced by a mean of 2.8716. On the other hand, church membership was found to have the lowest mean compared to other aspects of performance as indicated by a mean of 2.6330. The results on all the aspects demonstrate a general agreement among respondents on the level to which churches affiliated with EAK emphasized their performance as shown by the low standard deviations.

4.2 Test of Hypothesis

Simple regression analysis was utilized to perform a statistical test to establish the relationship between the study variables. Balanced organizational controls was regressed on performance as shown by the coefficients in Table 3.

Table 3: Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
1 (Constant)	.615	.353		2.590	.011
Balanced organizational controls	.661	.089	.611	7.447	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance

Table 3 shows the constant to be 0.615, inferring that with all other factors held constant, the performance would be at 61.5 percent. Moreover, the study determined that balanced organizational control had a coefficient of 0.661. This implied that a unit increase in BOC would lead to an increase in performance by 66.1 percent. Based on these results, the study determined that strategic leadership was significant in influencing performance of churches affiliated with EAK in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The regression model extrapolated from the table 2 is:

$$\text{Organizational performance} = 0.615 + 0.661 \text{ Balanced organizational control}$$

The model summary outcomes show the coefficient of determination to be 0.633, demonstrating a strong positive relationship between the study variables. The R square is 0.528 which demonstrates that the independent variables collectively explained 52.8 percent of all the variations in the influence of strategic leadership on the performance of churches. The results also implied that 47.2 percent of all variations in organizational performance could be contributed by other elements other than strategic leadership. Therefore, these other variables not captured in the study have to be considered to increase the performance of churches affiliated with EAK in Nairobi City County, Kenya. However, the study confirms that the strategic leadership variables are core elements and significant in determining performance. The results demonstrated by these variables were aligned with those found by Alayoubi, Al Shobaki, and Abu-Naser (2020) who determined that strategic leadership elements influence the competencies, utilization of resources, monitoring and evaluation, and the overall performances of organizations.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Organizational performance is a pivotal concern across all institutions. The objective of this study was to reveal the effect of establishing balanced organizational controls (as an aspect of strategic leadership) on the performance of churches affiliated with the EAK in Nairobi City County. The findings of the study determined that the long-term focus demonstrated by the churches anticipating risks linked with their activities and making necessary adjustments and changes to mitigate them contribute to their performance. This is coupled with churches being able to align their processes to the intended goals to enable them to excel in their programs and plans as a consequence. Lastly, the study revealed that churches must be involved in frequently and continually monitoring and evaluating their plans and activities to enable them to make changes accordingly and be in charge of their performance.

It was concluded that balanced organizational controls had a significant positive effect on the performance and that churches affiliated with EAK should be deliberate about monitoring and evaluation frameworks to leverage their resources, skills, and competencies as they will know and respond to how they perform accordingly. Churches and leaders employ systematic monitoring to assess their activities, identify areas for improvement, and capitalize on their resources, skills, and competencies. It was also determined that BOC provides churches with the tools and adaptive approaches to optimize their resources, skills, and competencies to impact and serve their communities while fulfilling their objectives.

6.0 Recommendations

The findings of this study are limited to balanced organizational controls as an aspect of strategic leadership. Churches should adopt and consistently apply balanced organizational controls. Leaders should focus on anticipating risks, aligning processes with intended goals, and establishing monitoring and evaluation frameworks. This proactive approach will enable churches to make necessary adjustments, mitigate risks, and stay in control of their performance. Churches should also recognize the significance of balanced organizational controls in optimizing resources, skills, and competencies. Churches should proactively leverage their capabilities to impact and serve their communities while fulfilling their objectives. This involves strategic planning, systematic monitoring, and adaptive approaches to ensure effective utilization of available resources. Organizations should adopt a long-term focus on anticipating risks and making necessary adjustments. Church organizations that align their processes with intended goals and engage in frequent monitoring and evaluation are better

positioned to navigate challenges, enhance their performance, and contribute positively to their communities.

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