

## The Influence of Change Communication on Organizational Performance of Isiolo County Government, Kenya

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** To examine the influence of change communication on organizational performance of Isiolo County government, Kenya.

**Methodology:** The study adopted a descriptive research design and targeted 42 directors, 61 managers, and 1,702 staff in sixteen departments of Isiolo County government. Therefore, a sample size of 36 directors, 50 managers, and 239 staff, was selected using a simple random sampling method. Additionally, quantitative data was collected using structured questionnaires and a pre-test study done in Marsabit County. Face, content, and criterion validities were examined and Cronbach coefficient was used to measure reliability. Additionally, the data was entered in SPSS version 24 for report generation. The study conducted descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, and mean. The inferential statistics that were conducted were correlation and multiple regression. Notably, data was presented using tables and explanations.

**Results:** The findings of the questionnaire indicated that 113(43%) of the respondents strongly agreed and 91(35%) agreed on a mean of 4.22 that there were well-established channels of communication used to relay information on strategic changes in departments. In addition, 102(39%) strongly agreed and 88(34%) agreed on a mean of 4.08 that the key message on change of strategies is always emphasized. Nevertheless, 100(38%) of the participants strongly disagreed and 82(31%) disagreed on a mean of 2.26 that there was an open policy whereby the staff were encouraged to give their feedback. The Pearson correlation coefficient was  $r=0.883$  at  $\alpha < 0.002$  and 99% significance level. Therefore, since the correlation coefficient was less than 1 and p-value was less than 0.05, the study rejected the null hypothesis.

**Conclusion:** The study concluded that the strategic managers at the county level had ensured that the changes made were conveniently communicated to all staff bearing clear information on what was to change. However, the study noted that the management gave limited or no room for feedback from the staff regarding the changed strategies. The study recommends that the management should develop policy frameworks that allow communication feedback. This will allow the staff to provide their opinion on the suitability of the strategic change management.

**Keywords:** Change Communication, Organizational Performance, Isiolo County Government, Kenya

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## 1.0 Introduction

Change communication is the process of delivering the intended relevant information on the transformation of organizational roles on time, and in the agreed media that supports feedback from the receiver (Mudany et al., 2021). Therefore, this strategy entails letting the involved stakeholders that change is about to happen and it is the operations that are to be affected. Additionally, it gives the stakeholders time to reflect on the message and offer their feedback such as seeking clarification on strategic change. Public organizations are under strategic changes from time to time depending on the vision that the leadership in place has. According to Barrow et al. (2022), for a change process to be successful, a series of steps are taken to generate motivation for change and influenced by the attitudes and behaviors of various stakeholders. This is to enhance the performance of public organizations.

Organizational performance is the process of adept planning and utilization of allocated national resources to provide services to the public consistently and reliably (Maina, 2021). Public organizations have been experiencing challenges in ensuring that their performance is improved. Globally, there has been resistance to change by the public servants in government institutions in Georgia (GGF, 2023). In American states such as Michigan, organization performance has been negatively affected by poor communication of strategic change. In Sweden, public organizations have faced inadequate allocation of financial resources to support various changes in their operations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Sweden [MFA-S], 2024). In Japan, lack of expertise to oversee technological strategic changes to keep up with the competition from private organizations has been affecting public organizations (CSIS, 2020).

Regionally, in a nation such as Ghana, there is low management support for strategic changes while in Nigerian public organizations, there has been a negative attitude of the staff towards learning for change (Abet et al., 2023). In South Africa, public staff have experienced unclarity in the objectives set making it hard to achieve the desired targets. In East African nation such as Uganda, public organizations have faced dismal performance due to lack of accountability from staff while in Tanzania, there is unsatisfactory involvement of staff in their role in change (Mogues et al., 2023).

Locally, there is lack of adequate policy structure to support complete change in public institutions (Maina, 2021). Further, there is poor coordination of departments that are affected by change and increased pressure to the staff to deliver under the new system (Muthoka & Waswa, 2021). Additionally, public organizations have faced poor sustenance of change especially when there are different changes occurring at the same time such as change of county leadership witnessed in 2022 making it hard to establish a common ground on how to measure performance of staff.

### 1.1 Problem Statement

Change management is essential for responding to dynamic business needs. Change is required when organizations expand their operations, incorporate new technology or even downsize their operations (Ketemaw & Amente, 2023). At county level, the promulgation of the new constitution allowed local governments to offer closer services to the people (Barrow et al., 2022). This is to ensure that democracy and accountability prevail in equal national resource sharing. To achieve this objective, quality change management adopted should be well-informed, consistent, and communicated to the required stakeholders for action and improved organizational performance.

However, there has been increased misappropriation of institutional funds meant to support change management in Kenya's county governments hence negatively affecting their

performance (IRTC, 2021). To this extent, the county executives have also failed to effectively provide clarity on intended strategic changes and involve all required stakeholders in financial decision-making, resulting in increased costs of operations, declined stakeholder morale, and resistance in local governments (Baariu, 2021).

Failure to address this concern would cause complete paralysis of service delivery mechanisms due to limited resource distribution to the localities. Therefore, the study examined the influence of change communication on organizational performance of Isiolo County Government, Kenya.

## 1.2 Research Hypothesis

H<sub>01</sub>: There was no significant influence of change communication on organizational performance of Isiolo County government, Kenya.

## 2.0 Literature Review

### 2.1 Theoretical Review

Communications theory was developed by West et al. (2010) and it stated that for communication to be effective the sender and the receiver ought to have a shared language that guides their interaction. This is because when the sender has a message, they are expected to encode it in a format that is appropriate for the receiver to grasp transmitted over an agreed channel. Once the receiver gets the message, they decode the intentions of the message to comprehend the desires of the sender for effective feedback on the message (Maina, 2021).

This theory informed change communication whereby the desire of the management to instigate changes in the organization can only be complete when they pass the key message through the agreed channels of communication (Li et al., 2021). Therefore, the message reaches the intended receiver within the shortest duration of time to act on the suggested strategic change management (Kiplagat, 2020). Notably, to ensure that the message is well received, the frequency of communication is paramount between the management and the operations staff (Mogues, et al., 2023).

It may even go to the extent of customizing communication in a language and format that the receiver comprehends effectively for purposes of feedback mechanism (Lomoro, 2020). Therefore, changes in the structure and roles of the staff when communicated on time, can be acted upon and any limitations from the staff are clearly noted and on time for the cause of strategic action (Pasape & Godson, 2022). The mediums used to offer communication must be similar to what the receiver is used to and frequently uses to avoid undelivered messages causing inefficiencies in the normal routine of strategic operations.

### 2.2 Empirical Review

Globally, Ketemaw and Amente (2023) reviewed how performance of an organization was affected by instigating strategic changes. Through reviewing twenty-eight articles, the study noted that when there was a strategic change, the accurate message needed to be communicated on time to the concerned parties. This was because when an accurate message was not communicated, speculation set in, causing institutional panic among the staff affecting their optimum output. However, Ketemaw and Amente (2023) used secondary data materials from publications which could be a result of respective author bias. The implication of this in a study is that the findings are misguided by skewed previous results.

Regionally, Chummun and Nleya (2023) evaluated how Zimbabwean insurance organizations' performance was affected by strategic changes and involvement of staff. The study included

one hundred and fifteen staff and were required to answer the questionnaires. Communication was among the constructs measured and its findings indicated that the strategic change worked effectively when the management communicated frequently to the staff and encouraged staff feedback. However, the management often failed to consult with the staff on problem-solving hence not giving them a chance of self-improvement negatively affecting their performance. Nevertheless, Chummun and Nleya (2023) did not consider the channels of communication used by the managers when communicating strategic change to the staff.

Locally, Nyambane et al. (2023) explored how Kenya's western counties offered their services and how change management was implemented to enhance quality assurance. Through the implementation of correlation research design, a population of three hundred and eighty directors and chief officers were included to answer the questionnaires in 10 counties located in western region of Kenya. The study established that when the communication of change was present, the quality of services provided by the count government improved significantly. Therefore, since the study was done in Western region counties, the current study will widen the scope to Isiolo County to examine how communication on strategic changes affected the performance of the county government.

Baariu (2021) explored how projects of Meru County government performed when change management was instigated. One hundred and three project-related members in county government of Meru were included and issued questionnaires to answer. The study established that performance improved when the staff were committed to the projects. Therefore, commitment came about when the senior management communicated and portrayed trust among the staff in handling various duties at the county government. The various forms of communication included emails, websites, memos, phone calls, WhatsApp messages, and text messages. That notwithstanding, Baariu (2021) did not mention how communication policy structure was affected when there was change management.

### **3.0 Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive research design and targeted 42 directors, 61 managers, and 1,702 staff in sixteen departments of Isiolo County government. Therefore, Nassiuma (2000) formula was used to obtain the sample size of 36 directors, 50 managers, and 239 staff, selected using a simple random sampling method. Additionally, quantitative data was collected using structured questionnaires and a pre-test study done in Marsabit County. Face, content, and criterion validities were examined and Cronbach coefficient was used to measure reliability. Additionally, the data was entered in SPSS version 24 for report generation. The study conducted descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, and mean. The inferential statistics that were conducted were correlation and multiple regression. Notably, data was presented using tables and explanations.

### **4.0 Results and Discussion**

#### **4.1 Response Rate**

The study sampled 26 directors, 50 managers, and 239 staff from county government of Isiolo. They were issued closed-ended questionnaires that had six sections with a total of 5 questions in each section. The results of their response rates are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Response Rate**

Respondents	Sampled	Response	Percentage
Directors	26	22	85%
Managers	50	42	84%
Staff	239	197	82%
Total	315	261	83%

The results depicted in Table 1 reveal that 22(85%) directors, 42(84%) managers, and 197(82%) staff members responded to the study. This equates to an average response rate of 83%. Consequently, as per Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a response rate exceeding 70% signified an exceptionally positive study outcome. The results therefore meant that the current study's response rate was excellent which was attributed to increased motivation of the senior management and the junior staff towards necessitating change management to increased organizational performance. This could have been brought about by strategic changes made by the new county government towards improving the operations of the county staff when dispensing service delivery among the residents of Isiolo county.

#### 4.2 Reliability Results

A pre-test study was conducted in Marsabit County, whereby 4 directors, 5 managers, and 2 staff were randomly selected to answer the questionnaires. Their responses were examined through Cronbach alpha to ascertain the reliability of the questionnaires as indicated in Table 2.

**Table 2: Reliability Results**

Instrument	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Change communication	0.874	5

Table 2 shows that questions asked on change communication had a Cronbach alpha of 0.874. According to Taber (2018), the reliability of an instrument is highest when its coefficient ranges from 0.7 to 1, and it is least reliable when it falls below 0.7. Based on this, the study's questionnaires were considered reliable since their coefficient was 0.874. This meant that the questions asked were highly related to the variables of the study and also easily comprehensible to the sampled population.

#### 4.3 Descriptive Statistics of Organizational Performance

Organizational performance was the dependent variable and it measured appraisal of internal processes, strengths and weaknesses, employee feedback, realistic goals, and employee satisfaction. The study administered questionnaires that had an ordinal Likert scale, where 1 represented strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3- neutral, 4 -agree, and 5- strongly agree. Table 3 shows the results of the questionnaire.

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Organizational Performance**

Statements N=261	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
Appraisal of internal processes	10 (4%)	11 (4%)	37 (14%)	80 (31%)	123 (47%)	4.36
Strengths and weaknesses of employees	19 (7%)	11 (4%)	49 (19%)	75 (29%)	107 (41%)	4.14
Employee feedback	23 (9%)	50 (19%)	80 (31%)	64 (25%)	44 (16%)	3.14
Setting realistic goals	20 (8%)	46 (18%)	89 (34%)	68 (26%)	38 (14%)	3.15
Employee satisfaction is encouraged	113 (44%)	84 (32%)	22 (8%)	29 (11%)	13 (5%)	2.17

Table 3 indicates that majority of the respondents 123(47%) strongly agreed and 80(31%) agreed on a mean of 4.36 that internal processes are often appraised to evaluate the effectiveness of change communication strategies. The result meant that after a strategy involving change of operations was implemented, the management was keen to ensure that the resultant change was appraised. This was in terms of assessing whether it enhanced internal processes or an entire system. According to Maina (2021), continuous evaluation of strategies in an organization creates a conducive environment in that the staff would point out areas challenging them to effective provision of solutions by the management. Muthoka and Waswa (2021), revealed that performance of county governments was pegged on clear monitoring and evaluation methods of the strategies to ensure that they serve the vision, mission, and objectives of the institution.

Table 3 also indicates that 107(41%) respondents strongly agreed and 75(29%) agreed on a mean of 4.14 that the strengths and weaknesses of the staff were noted when new technology was implemented. This result meant that the management ensured that they assessed the areas of staff weaknesses to complement training and other motivating factors. The staff who were noted to show signs of strengths in a particular area of technology were encouraged further by being offered resources that would ensure that their productivity was enhanced.

This finding was supported by Muriithi and Wamiori (2020) who also noted that as a result of introduction of an Integrated Financial Management Information System [IFMIS], different management teams were required to keep assessing the suitability of the system towards

complimenting service delivery goals in Kenyan counties. Further, Munjogu and Kiiru (2024) substantiated the relevance of employee training in enhancing performance from a county government context. As per their findings, frequent training among the staff promoted more suitability of tasks to be accomplished and made it more convenient for the Laikipia county staff to interact with the various levels of technology.

However, Table 3 indicates that 113(44%) respondents, strongly disagreed and 84(32%) disagreed on a mean of 2.17 that employee satisfaction was encouraged for sustained strategic change management. The results meant that the individual desires of the staff were not catered for by the management which created dissatisfaction with various implemented strategies.

Nevertheless, Guyo and Thoronjo (2022) disagreed with Abet et al. (2023) that taking into consideration each staff's desired way of approach would limit the suitability of the implemented strategies towards sustainability of change in government institutions such as Isiolo County referral hospital.

#### 4.4 Descriptive Statistics of Change Communication

Change communication was the first independent variable and it had indicators such as channels of communication, key message, frequency of communication, feedback mechanism, and customized communications. The study administered questionnaires to the respondents whose results are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Change Communication**

Statements N=261	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
Established channels of communication	10 (4%)	15 (6%)	32 (12%)	91 (35%)	113 (43%)	4.22
Key messages always emphasized	10 (4%)	6 (2%)	55 (21%)	88 (34%)	102 (39%)	4.08
Communication of impending change	32 (12%)	51 (20%)	86 (33%)	53 (20%)	39 (15%)	3.65
Open policy for feedback from staff	100 (38%)	82 (31%)	49 (19%)	12 (5%)	18 (7%)	2.26
Customized communication	31 (12%)	52 (20%)	78 (30%)	62 (24%)	38 (14%)	3.46

Table 4 indicates 113(43%) of the respondents strongly agreed and 91(35%) agreed on a mean of 4.22 that there were well-established channels of communication used to rely on information on strategic changes in departments. This result meant that effective channels of

communication within departments guaranteed that all employees were aligned with the purpose and goal of strategic change management in Isiolo County government. Communicating effectively increased employee engagement by keeping people informed which built trust between the management making strategies and the junior staff implementing them. Notably, communication brought about work-related excellence whereby the concerned parties felt wanted and valued towards improving the organizational performance from a county perspective. According to Chen et al. (2021), notable communication channels mainly applied at county governments were in-person conversations, WhatsApp, telephone, emails, memos, websites, and text messages. Li et al. (2021) had reservations on effectiveness of communication channels such as WhatsApp for lack of accountability of various communications made at a particular timeline.

In addition, Table 4 indicates that 102(39%) respondents strongly agreed and 88(34%) agreed on a mean of 4.08 that the key message on change of strategies is always emphasized. The results meant that stressing the need for the strategic shift was critical to ensuring that employees understood the management structure of Isiolo County Government and believed their contributions were recognized. This in turn boosted their determination and devotion, an enhancement to overall efficiency. Notably, Rikardus and Sopiah (2022) revealed that when the management was consistent in providing new information on the changes in strategies that were to be implemented, it enabled the junior staff to structure their minds to shift focus. Therefore, when changes came into full implementation, they restricted their thinking toward accepting the new strategies for purposes of improving organizational performance.

Nevertheless, Table 4 indicates that 100(38%) participants strongly disagreed and 82(31%) disagreed on a mean of 2.26 that there was an open policy whereby the staff were encouraged to give their feedback. The findings indicate that the county government did not offer a forum where staff members felt free to voice their opinions and provide ideas about issues. According to Daritsu (2022), county government’s leadership has often been accused of making decisions and hardly involved the suggestions of lower-level staff members. This was to limit decision-making to a specific group of managers whose interests are meant for purposes of improvement of performance.

#### 4.5 Correlation Analysis to Test Hypothesis of the Study

The study’s research hypotheses indicated that change communication had no significant influence on organizational performance. Table 5 shows the results.

**Table 5: Pearson Correlation of Change Communication**

	Organizational Performance	Change Communication
	Pearson Correlation	1
Organizational Performance	Sig. (2-tailed)	.883
	N	.002
	Pearson Correlation	261
Change communication	Sig. (2-tailed)	.883
	N	.002
		261

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



Table 5 shows that correlation coefficient for change communication was  $r=0.883$  at  $\alpha < 0.002$  and 99% significance level. Based on the fact that the correlation was less than 1 at a significance value of less than 0.05, the study rejected the null hypothesis. Therefore, change communication was noted to have the highest influence on organizational performance which meant that channels of communication, key message, frequency of communication, feedback mechanism, and customized communication when applied by the county government, enhanced its performance greatly.

#### 4.6 Summary

The findings of the questionnaire indicated that 113(43%) of the respondents strongly agreed and 91(35%) agreed on a mean of 4.22 that there were well-established channels of communication used to relay information on strategic changes in departments. In addition, 102(39%) strongly agreed and 88(34%) agreed on a mean of 4.08 that the key message on change of strategies is always emphasized. Nevertheless, 100(38%) of the participants strongly disagreed and 82(31%) disagreed on a mean of 2.26 that there was an open policy whereby the staff were encouraged to give their feedback.

The Pearson correlation coefficient was  $r=0.883$  at  $\alpha < 0.002$  and 99% significance level. Therefore, since the correlation coefficient was less than 1 and p-value was less than 0.05, the study rejected the null hypothesis.

#### 5.0 Conclusion

The conclusion made on change communication was that it had a positive influence on organizational performance. This was because the strategic management at the county level had ensured that the changes made were conveniently communicated to all staff bearing clear information on what was to change. However, the study noted that the management gave limited or no room for feedback from the staff regarding the changed strategies. This brought demotivation from the staff to implement the suggested changes in their respective departments.

#### 6.0 Recommendation

The recommendations on change communication are that the management should develop policy frameworks that allow communication feedback. This will allow the staff to provide their opinion on the suitability of the strategic change management. Additionally, the staff should also ensure that they work closely with the first-line supervisors, whereby any feedback regarding strategic change is channeled to the management through them in the meantime. This is to ensure that the staff shows efforts in trying to reach out to the senior management in regards to providing ideas on areas of improvement on proposed strategic change management.

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