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CORPORATE LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN KENYA AGRICULTURAL AND LIVESTOCK RESEARCH ORGANIZATION (KALRO): MEDIATING INFLUENCE OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

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ABSTRACT

Problem Statement: Despite the importance of effective leadership for success, Kenya's agricultural productivity is below average. The role of policy implementation in the leadership-performance link is not well understood, especially in the context of the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO).

Purpose: This research aimed to explore the relationships among corporate leadership, policy implementation, and KALRO's performance.

Methodology: The study used a mixed methods design, observing 75 management organs and conducting a cross-sectional survey and interpretive phenomenological analysis. Data analysis included correlation, factor analysis, path analyses, and diagnostic tests.

Results: Corporate leadership significantly influenced policy implementation, which in turn predicted KALRO's performance. Even after controlling for policy implementation, corporate leadership remained a significant predictor, indicating partial mediation.

Conclusion and Recommendations: Policy implementation is a crucial mediator in the leadership-performance relationship. Recommendations for KALRO include prioritizing gender diversity, strengthening leadership development, conducting regular performance appraisals, improving communication, engaging staff, enhancing monitoring and evaluation systems, and focusing on strategic leadership.

Keywords: *Mediation, KALRO, Corporate Leadership, Policy Implementation, Organizational Performance*

INTRODUCTION

In this contemporary era, marked by a growing demand for safe, affordable, and readily available nutritious food, corporate leadership plays a crucial role in aligning action research within state-funded agricultural and livestock research organizations. This leadership, comprising executives, administrators, and managers, has a significant influence over organizational performance by ensuring adherence to strategic policies and fostering partnerships both internally and externally. The collaborative nature of corporate leadership involves executive officers and administrators working together to achieve the organization's mandate, emphasizing policy implementation, and contributing to growth, visibility, sustainability, and impact. This study examined the role of corporate leadership in influencing the performance of the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO) using policy implementation as a mediating variable. Scholars like Kilonzi et al. (2023), Knies et al. (2016), and Kitonga (2017) highlighted the strategic influence corporate leaders exert on organizational performance, thus emphasizing the need for effective leadership amid persisting challenges in achieving optimal organizational performance.

The global population is projected to reach 9.9 billion by 2050 (FAO, 2021), demanding over 27 percent more food, and making aligned corporate leadership and policy implementation within agricultural and livestock research organizations essential. Various global challenges, including conflicts and economic reversals, have contributed to heightened food insecurity risks, particularly affecting over 500 million smallholders worldwide, with over 277 million inhabitants in Africa at risk of starvation and malnutrition (Stephens et al., 2018). Despite the presence of numerous state-funded agricultural and livestock research organizations in Africa, achieving food and nutrition security has remained critically challenging, thus calling for strong corporate leadership and policy implementation to meet development goals. Governments of developing nations reformed their crop and livestock sectors, emphasizing the critical role of effective corporate leadership within institutional frameworks to ensure innovation, accountability, scalability, and sustainability (Suri & Udry, 2022). This intentional effort resulted in the global establishment of agricultural and livestock research organizations. Studies conducted in various countries, including Singapore (Howlett et al., 2015), France and Canada (Berthet & Hickey, 2018), the United Kingdom (Whittington et al., 2019), and Jordan (Almahasneh et al., 2023), consistently highlighted the positive impact of effective corporate leadership on organizational performance. These studies

underscored the importance of clear strategic direction, adherence to internal policies, and the establishment of long-term goals as key factors contributing to organizational success.

Research conducted in Nigeria Maduenyi et al. (2015) and Ghana Akparep et al. (2019) has demonstrated a consistent positive impact of corporate leadership on organizational performance on a continental scale. The impact was noted for its ability to foster coordinated research, facilitate technology transfer, foster staff cohesion, support personal development, and increase stakeholder satisfaction. Research conducted at the national level by Olaka et al. (2017), Oketch et al. (2021), Warinda et al. (2024), and Nyandika et al. (2023) showed a positive relationship between the implementation of policies and strategic leadership. However, Awino et al. (2017) pointed out that there are still problems with the parastatals that deal with agriculture, livestock, and fisheries. These difficulties were ascribed to elements such as inadequate leadership, insufficient application of policies, political meddling, and integrity issues, especially in inclement weather. The study investigated how companies improve performance through the application of corporate leadership principles and policies, with a foundation in Organizational Excellence Theory (OET). The theory was in line with four other theories: stakeholder, institutional, legitimacy, and upper echelons. The purpose of the study was to determine whether corporate leadership (an independent variable), KALRO's performance (a dependent variable), and the implementation of policy (a mediator) are related.

The study examined collaborative resource management among top executives, with a focus on corporate leadership's role, which according to Haski-Leventhal (2021), can be divided into three categories: section directors, top management, and informal leaders. These executives are essential to an organization's ability to set strategy, define objectives, settle disputes, and promote moral behavior. This viewpoint is supported by Ba (2022), who claims that corporate leadership oversees quality control, resource allocation, organizational structure, policy execution, and vision creation. The study explored the overall effect of corporate leadership on the performance of the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO) using the Upper Echelons Theory and sought to determine how KALRO could improve its capacity to carry out its mandate in the face of conflicting demands, using metrics such as corporate culture, human capital, organizational goal clarity, and strategic direction. It defined policy as a collectively formulated plan or course of action designed to guide organizational decision-making, with policy implementation referring to

interventions aimed at delivering strategic results aligned with approved strategies and organizational goals (Peters, 2018; Soares, 2018; McConnell, 2015; Goyal, 2021).

Established by the Government of Kenya through the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research (KALR) Act No. 17 of 2013 (revised in 2019), KALRO emerged from the merger of four parastatals: Kenya Agricultural Research Institute, Tea Research Foundation, Coffee Research Foundation, and Suga Research Foundation. This legislative action defined KALRO's structure, comprising the Board of Management, the Directorate, the Secretariat, and research institutes. The study investigated the role of organizational capacity—encompassing human resource capability, infrastructure availability, and administrative support—in influencing policy implementation in KALRO, anchored in institutional theories. With a vision to excel in agricultural and livestock research for transformed livelihoods, KALRO aims to enhance the agricultural sector's growth, facilitate technology generation, and coordinate the transfer and utilization of research outputs. The study aligned with findings that emphasized the importance of leadership in ensuring psychological balance among staff, providing social capital, strategic direction, and ensuring stakeholder satisfaction for high organizational performance (Schwens & Wagner, 2019; Haider et al., 2018; Maduenyi et al., 2015; Khalid et al., 2019).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Effective corporate leadership, characterized by authenticity, decisiveness, focus, skills, and communication, significantly contributes to organizational success. Despite the pivotal role of agricultural and livestock research in meeting global food demand, concerns persist regarding their performance. Predictions indicate a 27% increase in population requiring a balanced diet by 2050 (FAO, 2022). Global conflicts and economic downturns have disrupted agricultural productivity, affecting over half a billion farmers. Consequently, 277 million people in Africa are at risk of starvation (FAO, 2021). In Kenya, despite surpassing East Africa's and Africa's average productivity, the country still falls below the global average (FAO, 2022; GoK, 2019). The average monthly food consumption per capita in Kenya is the lowest compared to East Africa, Africa, and the global average.

Governments in Africa have attempted to direct research centers to operate under well-structured corporate leadership to address these challenges (Stephens et al., 2018). Despite having diverse

research centers, a reduction in agricultural productivity and persistent food insecurity have been observed. There is scant evidence on the impact of policy implementation (as a mediator) on the relationship between corporate leadership and the performance of KALRO. Despite well-articulated leadership structures and funding within KALRO, the application of technologies and research findings to benefit smallholders remains stagnant. The questions that remain unanswered are: What is the role of corporate leadership on the performance of KALRO? To what extent does policy implementation mediate the relationship between corporate leadership and KALRO's performance?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- i. To establish the effect of corporate leadership on the performance of KALRO.
- ii. To evaluate the mediating effect of policy implementation on the relationship between corporate leadership and performance of KALRO.

RESEARCH HYPOTHEIS

H₀₁: There is no significant effect between corporate leadership and KALRO's performance.

H₀₂: There is no significant mediating effect of policy implementation on the relationship between corporate leadership and performance of KALRO.

THEORITICAL REVIEW/ FRAMEWORK

Five theories have collectively provided a comprehensive framework for understanding the dynamics of leadership and organizational performance. Firstly, the Organizational Excellence Theory, pioneered by Peters (1999), underscored success through partnerships, stakeholder engagement, and efficient processes. It emphasized the involvement of top leadership and alignment with policies but acknowledged the pitfalls of neglecting policy execution and workflow standardization (Schwens & Wagner, 2019). Secondly, the Upper Echelons Theory, initiated by Hambrick and Mason (1994), examined how the backgrounds of top management influenced performance and strategic direction. However, it lacked clarity on how leadership backgrounds precisely drove expected outcomes (Hambrick, 2018).

Thirdly, the Legitimacy Theory, proposed by Lindblom (1994), aligned organizational values with broader stakeholder values to maintain legitimacy. It addressed the "legitimacy gap" but lacked universal applicability (Solikhah et al., 2020). Fourthly, the Institutional Theory, proposed by

Meyer and Rowan (1977), DiMaggio and Powell (1983), and Scott (2008), highlighted how past actions and societal structures influenced performance. Its guided adaptation to social expectations but may have overlooked socio-political processes (Munir, 2019). Lastly, the Stakeholder Theory, coined by Freeman (1984), prioritized ethical considerations and stakeholder relationships. While it emphasized alliances, it overlooked political interferences and stakeholder conflicts (Sulkowski et al., 2018). These theories have collectively provided a robust foundation for understanding leadership and organizational dynamics, although each has its limitations.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Corporate Leadership and Organizational Performance

Corporate leadership involves cultivating strategic thinking to navigate organizational complexities and pursue transformative agenda. The study emphasized the importance of strategic direction, organizational clarity, and cost-effective multi-stakeholder network for effective leadership. Prior research by Iqbal et al. (2020) highlighted positive impact of strategic leadership principles on organizational performance, emphasizing the need for management control systems and practices like team size management, organizational structuring, and research culture maintenance. Gusmão et al. (2018) conducted explored influence of strategic leadership on organizational performance within the Ministry of Government of Timor-Leste, Indonesia. Positive relationships between strategic leadership, organizational learning, and organizational citizenship behavior were identified. Limitations such as absence of mediation effect prompted this study to focus on assessing mediating effect of policy implementation on the relationship between corporate leadership and KALRO's performance, opting for a census approach for greater generalizability.

Corporate Leadership, Policy Implementation, and Organizational Performance

Prior research (Resnick, 2018) highlighted challenges in policy implementation, such as resource interruptions, and recognized the influence of political leadership and external partners on policy reforms. Drago et al. (2023) emphasized dynamic capabilities and policy-driven strategic behavior, while Probstl et al. (2023) focused on governance transformation for enhanced organizational performance. Donkor et al. (2021) explored leadership styles' mediation effects on personnel performance in state-owned enterprises. Nuwagaba et al. (2022) found a partial mediation effect

of strategy implementation on the relationship between top management characteristics and performance of state agencies in Uganda, emphasizing the necessity for top management to enhance their expert capabilities in strategy formulation and execution. Okech et al. (2021) investigated the relationship between strategic leadership styles and organizational performance in Kenya's agriculture, livestock, and fisheries sector, identifying positive correlations but noting limitations in the study's narrow focus and exclusion of top leadership, rendering the results non-generalizable.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used a mixed methods approach, utilizing concurrent triangulation to blend inductive and deductive thinking. Data collection involved a cross-sectional survey for quantitative examination of variable relationships and interpretive phenomenological analysis for qualitative insights into respondents' experiences and interpretations. The target population comprised specific segments of KALRO's authorized management divisions, including the Board of Management, directorate, Secretariat, research institutes, research centres, and KALRO Seeds. A total of 75 institutions with 75 management organs formed the units of analysis. The unit of observation was 248 respondents, comprising 60 directors and 188 top leaders from various work locations. Due to the small size of the target population, comprising 248 top leadership and managers, a census was conducted. This ensured a detailed assessment without sampling bias. Primary data was collected using an online structured questionnaire and focus group discussions. The Likert scale assessed perceptions, while focus group discussions provided a platform for liberal opinions. The questionnaire covered data on 65 items within the study variables: corporate leadership, policy implementation, and organizational performance. A pilot study with 16 respondents (6% of the unit of observation) was conducted to improve the quality of the questionnaire that was eventually shared with the 248 respondents in the main study. A mixed methods approach was adopted for data analysis. Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS, and qualitative data using NVivo. Cronbach's alpha, with a threshold of $\alpha = .700$, was applied to affirm internal consistency reliability. Confirmatory factor analysis, multiple regression analyses, and principal component analyses were used in data reduction and pattern recognition. Moderated mediation analysis was done using the approaches proposed by Baron and Kenny as well as Hayes' PROCESS Macro.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study had a high response rate of 85.5%, ensuring the reliability and validity of the findings, with Cronbach's Alpha coefficients indicating strong internal consistency. KALRO's leadership was predominantly male (67.9%) and the age group of leaders significantly affected the organization's performance, suggesting the need for strategic planning considering different age groups. The leadership structure was moderately balanced, but the short tenure of leaders raised concerns about losing institutional memory. Supervisory roles were positively correlated with organizational performance, with 84.9% of respondents in such roles rating KALRO's performance as high. This was confirmed by Pang and Lu's (2018) study, which found a significant relationship between organizational motivation, employee job satisfaction, and performance.

Correlation Analysis of Study Variables

Using Pearson's correlation coefficients, tests showed consistent and statistically significant positive associations among corporate leadership, policy implementation, and organizational performance. All Cronbach's alpha scores indicated internal reliability. The observed moderate positive correlations affirmed associations between variables with organizational performance showing significant correlations with corporate leadership ($r = .613, p < .001$) and policy implementation ($r = .502, p < .001$). The study's findings (Table 1) supported the rejection of the null hypothesis and highlighted interconnectedness of the variables.

Table 1: Pearson's Correlation Coefficient of Variables

		Corporate Leadership	Policy Implementation	Organization Performance
Corporate Leadership	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
Policy Implementation	Pearson Correlation	.653**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		
Organization Performance	Pearson Correlation	.613**	.502**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	
	N	212	212	212

Hypothesis Tests

Covariance-based structural equation modeling with factor analysis and linear regression was used to examine relationships among variables, and their impact on KALRO's performance. Three specific objectives and corresponding hypotheses were analyzed. Normality, assessed with Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic, indicated non-significant results for corporate leadership (.181), policy implementation (.152), and organizational performance (.273). The first hypothesis, asserting no significant link between corporate leadership and KALRO's performance, was refuted by the study. It employed a composite indicator for leadership, integrating strategic direction, organizational mandate clarity, human capital, and corporate culture. A regression model with weighted averages for three constructs revealed a notable correlation, yielding a 37.5% R-Square in the single regression equation and 39.3% in the multiple regression equation (Table 2).

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R ² Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.613 ^a	.375	.372	.437	.375	126.238	1	210	<.001

Table 2 presents analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the model evaluating linkage between corporate leadership and KALRO's performance. The study rejected the null hypothesis, affirming significant relationship between the variables ($F = 126.238, p < .001$). Assessment of multicollinearity revealed no concerns, with tolerance (1.00) and VIF (1.00) values indicating absence of significant correlation among components of corporate leadership variable.

Table 3: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	24.064	1	24.064	126.238	<.001 ^a
	Residual	40.031	210	.191		
	Total	64.095	211			

The second objective of the study aimed to explore mediating role of policy implementation in the relationship between corporate leadership and KALRO's performance. The corresponding hypothesis posited that there was no significant mediating effect. Using Hayes' four-step model, a

modified version of Baron and Kenny's framework, steps 1, 2, and 3 were analyzed, generating significant results. In step 1, results reveal a robust relationship between corporate leadership and organizational performance. With a substantial unstandardized coefficient (.550), a high Beta value (.613), and a significant t-value (11.236, $p < .001$), effective leadership significantly influenced performance. Confidence interval (.454 to .647) underscored precision of this impact. The model's strong fit ($OP = 1.907 + .55*CL$), reflected in $R^2 = .375$ and Adjusted $R^2 = .372$, along with a highly significant F-value (126.238, $p < .001$), affirms the importance of leadership in organizational success (Table 4).

Table 4: Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	CI	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			LLCI	ULCI
1 (Constant)	1.907	.189		10.096	<.001	1.535	2.280
Corporate Leadership	.550	.049	.613	11.236	<.001	.454	.647

The second step of the mediation regression analysis revealed that corporate leadership exhibited notable impact on policy implementation (Beta = 0.653, $p < .001$), with a .487-unit increase for every one-unit rise. The model's strong fit is evident in $R^2 = .427$ and Adjusted $R^2 = .424$. The high F-value of 156.419 ($p < .001$) reinforced model's robustness, emphasizing substantial effect of corporate leadership on enhancing policy implementation ($PI = 1.438 + .487*CL$), thus nullifying the second null hypothesis that no such effects exist (Table 5).

Table 5: Level of Significance of Step 2 of Mediation Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	CI	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			LLCI	ULCI
1 (Constant)	1.438	.150		9.578	.000	1.142	1.734
Corporate Leadership	.487	.039	.653	12.507	.000	.410	.584

a. Dependent Variable: Policy Implementation

$R = .653$; $R\text{-Square} = .427$; Adjusted $R\text{-Square} = .424$; $F = 156.419$; $p < .001$

The third step of mediation regression analysis shows influence of policy implementation on organizational performance (Table 6). Unstandardized coefficient of .213, with a significant t-

value of 2.486 ($p = .014$), underscored positive impact of policy implementation ($OP = 177 + .213*PI$). Confidence intervals from .044 to .382 provided significant estimates, while $R^2 = .427$ and Adjusted $R^2 = .388$ confirmed policy implementation as significant factor in enhancing organizational performance ($F \text{ Change} = 67.767, p < .001$).

Table 6: Level of Significance of Step 3 of Mediation Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	CI	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			LLCI	ULCI
1 (Constant)	.177	.086		2.486	.000	1.160	2.042
Policy Implementation	.213	.086	.177	2.486	.014	.044	.382

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance

$R = .627$; $R\text{-Square} = .427$; $\text{Adjusted } R\text{-Square} = .388$; $F \text{ Change} = 67.767$; $p < .001$

The fourth step involved a multiple regression analysis with both corporate leadership and policy implementation predicting KALRO's performance. Results indicated that both direct effects were positive and significant, with policy implementation (mediator) contributing to explained variability in organizational performance ($OP = 1.601 + .447*CL + .213*PI$). Adjusted R^2 values verified significant contribution of policy implementation, accounting for 1.6% in the variance produced from the relationship between corporate leadership and organizational performance (Table 7).

Table 7: Summary of Mediated Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.613 ^a	.375	.372	.437	.375	126.238	1	210	<.000
2	.627 ^a	.393	.388	.431	.393	67.765	1	209	<.000

a. Predictors: (constant), Corporate Leadership

b. Predictors: (constant), Corporate Leadership, Policy Implementation

The ANOVA results further supported mediated regression analysis, showing a reduction in regression sum of squares when policy implementation was included as a predictor. The F-statistics confirmed overall significance of predictors in explaining variance in organizational performance (Table 8).

Table 8: ANOVA^a for Mediated Regression Analysis

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	26.064	1	24.064	126.238	<.001 ^b
	Residual	40.031	210	.191		
	Total	64.095	211			
2	Regression	25.214	2	12.607	67.767	<.001 ^c
	Residual	38.881	210	.186		
	Total	64.095	211			

a. Dependent Variable: Performance of KALRO

b. Predictors: (Constant), Corporate Leadership

c. Predictors: (Constant), Corporate Leadership, Policy Implementation

The coefficients observed in the mediated regression analysis underscored the direct impact of corporate leadership on performance, revealing a reduction in coefficient magnitude with the introduction of policy implementation. The comparison between models strongly implied that policy implementation played a partial mediating role in the relationship between corporate leadership and organizational performance (Table 9).

Table 9: Coefficients for Mediated Regression Analysis

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		F	Sig.
		B	SE	Beta	Sig.		
1b	(Constant)	1.907	0.189			10.096	0.001
	Corporate Leadership	0.55	0.049	0.613		11.236	0.001
4b	(Constant)	1.601	0.224			7.155	0.001
	Corporate Leadership	0.447	0.064	0.497		6.986	0.001
	Policy Implementation	0.213	0.086	0.177		2.486	0.014

The path estimates, accompanied by 95% confidence intervals, reveal significant insights into relationship dynamics between independent variable (corporate leadership), the mediator (policy implementation), and dependent variable (organizational performance). The indirect effect of corporate leadership on organizational performance through policy implementation is statistically significant ($\beta_c = .487$, $SE = .0486$, $LLCI = .3887$, $ULCI = .581$, $p < .001$). Both direct paths from policy implementation to organizational performance ($\beta_b = .213$, $SE = .0880$, $LLCI = .0389$, $ULCI = .385$, $p = .015$) and from corporate leadership to organizational performance ($\beta_c = .447$, $SE = .0671$, $LLCI = .3115$, $ULCI = .573$, $p < .001$) were statistically significant. These findings highlight that corporate leadership exerts influence through both direct and indirect channels, supporting presence of mediation in the observed relationships.

In addition, the indirect effect ($\beta_a * \beta_b$) between corporate leadership and organizational performance is estimated to be .104 ($SE = .0448$, $LLCI = .0189$, $ULCI = .193$), indicating a significant mediating effect. The total effect ($\beta_c + [\beta_a * \beta_b]$) is .550 ($SE = .0618$, $ULCI = .4205$, $LLCI = .665$), underscoring a robust overall association. The mediation analysis suggests that 18.9% of the relationship is mediated ($\beta_a * \beta_b$), while 81.1% is attributed to the direct effect (β_c). These findings contribute valuable insights into the nuanced interplay between corporate leadership, policy implementation, and organizational performance. The conditional moderating effect is as detailed in Figure 1.

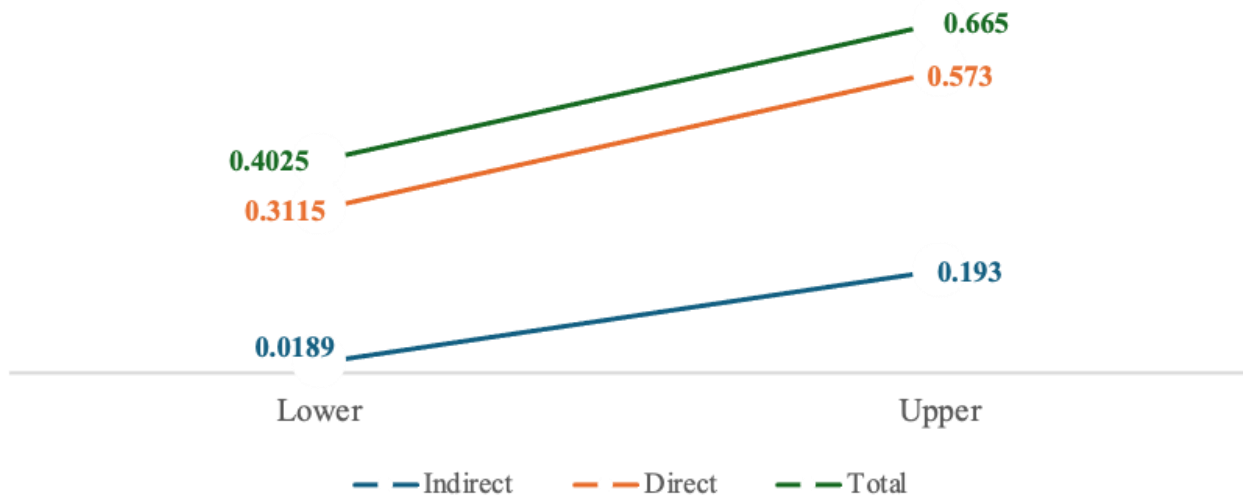


Figure 1: Conditional Mediating Effects

In conclusion, the study rejected the null hypothesis, indicating a significant mediating effect of policy implementation on the relationship between corporate leadership and KALRO's performance. The findings underscored the intricate interplay between corporate leadership, policy implementation, and organizational performance in the context of KALRO.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis used interpretive phenomenological analysis, focusing on textual, visual, and verbal responses to contextualize quantitative findings. Utilizing NVivo software, transcribed data were coded, categorized, and explored for connections between themes. Deductive coding approach was applied to responses from Board members, introducing pre-determined categories aligned with research questions. Roles of Board of Management were explored through questions on strategic activities, policy coordination, and oversight. The Board's support in achieving KALRO's mandate was emphasized, including clear approvals, policy oversight, and resource mobilization. Suggested new areas were resource mobilization, strategic networks, and patenting of inventions. Government support over the past five years was rated positively, with satisfaction expressed for enacted laws and policies. Challenges in coordination, highlighted in the National Agricultural Research System (NARS) Policy, led to proposed solutions, emphasizing streamlined policies and support for capacity building. The level of implementation of approved strategies and policies was examined, showcasing KALRO's success in research dissemination, policy formulation, and resource mobilization. Top management was advised to focus on sustainable resource mobilization and technology dissemination. Policies for review included funding security, budget consistency, mentorship programs, and collaboration policies. The Science, Technology, and Innovation Act required revision for digital agriculture, aligning with global trends.

CONCLUSIONS

The study explored the impact of corporate leadership and policy implementation on KALRO's performance, rejecting all null hypotheses. It revealed a male-dominated leadership in KALRO, indicating a need for greater gender diversity. Most leaders were over 45 years old, suggesting the need for more mentorship and involvement of younger staff. The study also highlighted the potential effects of leadership tenure and supervision patterns on institutional memory and performance. The strategic placement of duty stations was discussed, emphasizing the benefits of

a devolved governance system. The main objective was to establish a positive relationship between corporate leadership and KALRO's performance. An empirical model was used to assess various dimensions such as strategic direction, clarity of organizational mandate, human capital, and corporate culture. The model revealed that corporate leadership significantly predicts organizational performance, accounting for 37.5% of the variance. The second objective investigated the mediating effect of policy implementation on the relationship between corporate leadership and KALRO's performance. The mediation analysis showed a substantial total effect of .550 ($p < 0.001$), highlighting the impact of corporate leadership on performance. The direct effect was robust at .447 ($p < 0.001$), indicating an independent influence. Indirect effects through policy implementation emphasized the synergy between leadership and policies. The analysis suggests that policy implementation mediates 18.9% of the relationship, while the direct effect accounts for 81.1%. These findings provide valuable insights into the complex interplay between corporate leadership, policy implementation, and organizational performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends improvements in gender diversity and inclusivity within KALRO's leadership. To address prevalent age distribution of leaders, KALRO should consider implementing mentoring programs and increasing involvement of younger personnel. Efforts should enhance active engagement and collaboration among personnel, and strategic planning with top leadership to ensure effective implementation of policies. There is need to improve resource mobilization, conduct market-driven research, and explore innovative revenue generation strategies. Areas for improvement included better coordination of research activities, increasing global publication efforts, strategic staff replacement, and effective commercialization of research findings to align with KALRO's ambitious targets outlined in its revised Strategic Plan.

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