

Influence of Employee Training on Strategy Implementation at Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission North Rift and Western Regions, Kenya

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Abstract: *The Kenya Independent Electoral and boundaries Commission (IEBC) strategic plan 2011-2017 was reviewed in 2015 raising question that it had failed in its implementation. Literature reviewed indicated that challenges regarding implementation can be the reason for failure of achievement of strategic plan objectives. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the influence of employee training on strategy implementation for IEBC staff working in North Rift and Western Regions. The study was guided by human capital theory. The study was conducted at Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission regions of Kakamega, North Rift and Bungoma. Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The target population for the study involved 139 employees and 3 regional managers. A sample size of 103 employees and 3 regional managers were selected through stratified random and purposive sampling methods. Result of the study showed that there existed significant ($p < 0.01$) positive relationship between employee level of training and strategy implementation at IEBC. The study recommended that regular training should be provided to all staff at IEBC.*

Key words: *strategy implementation, training, strategy*

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I. Introduction

For organisation to sustain the pressures of competition and globalisation in the current world, strategic planning is important. Successful organizations understand the need for a sound business strategy and invest significant time, effort and money in strategy development. However, the real value of strategy can only be recognized through execution- the ability to execute strategy is more important than the quality of the strategy itself (Kaplan & Norton, 2005; Martin 2010). This involves the process of formulating and implementing strategies. Organisations have to organise material, time and human resources during the process of strategy planning to ensure they emerge successful. However, research conducted across the world shows that despite the hours invested in developing strategic plans, all too often they do not work. Regardless of how well organisations prepare, they are bound to encounter challenges along the way. For instance, Alio (2005) found that a discouraging 57% of firms were unsuccessful at executing strategic initiatives over the past three years. This is because the process of turning out plans into action is a difficult process because developing a strategic plan and implementing it in an organisation takes discipline, foresight, and a lot of honesty. The best-formulated strategies may fail to produce superior performance for the firm if they are not successfully implemented, as Noble (2000) notes. Effectiveness of strategy implementation is, at least in part, affected by the quality of people involved in the process (Govindarajan & Trimble, 2012). Hrebiniak (2006) recognized the difficulty of strategy execution with challenges such as lack of feelings of “ownership” of a strategy or execution plans among key employees. Here quality refers to skills of people required by a specific task or position (Peng & Littlejohn, 2001). Heracleous (2000) found that if middle management do not feel like have the requisite skills to implement it, then they are likely to sabotage its implementation.

The study was conducted in Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) Kakamega, Bungoma and North Rift Regions. The IEBC was established under Article 88 of the constitution of Kenya, 2010 as the successor body to the Interim Independent Electoral Commission (IIEC) and the Interim Independent Boundaries Review Committee (IIBRC). The IIEC was established by Parliament in 2008 through an amendment of Section 41 of the Kenyan Constitution. The IEBC is responsible for conducting and supervising referenda and elections to any elective office established under the constitution or as prescribed by an Act of Parliament. The IEBC operations are decentralised with field office in 17 regions managed by regional election coordinators. Considering the regions are expansive, only three regions; Bungoma (17), Kakamega (22) and North Rift (31) constituencies totalling to 70 constituencies. This was considered to be adequate for the study. The IEBC had a strategic plan for 2011-2017 but recently launched a new strategic plan for 2015-2020 in preparations for general elections to be held in 2017. This requires that the organisation need to have

implemented its strategic plan in readiness for the forthcoming general elections. Therefore the study sought to determine the extent to which employee level of influenced strategy implementation at IEBC in North Rift, Kakamega and Bungoma regions.

Research Question

The main research question was:

1. To what extent does employee’s training affect strategy implementation at Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission?

Research Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was tested for this paper.

H_{a1} There is a significant relationship between employee training skills and strategy implementation at Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission.

II. Theoretical framework

This paper was guided by human capital theory. The theory of human capital is rooted from the field of macroeconomic development theory (Schultz, 1993 cited Marimuthu, Arokiasamy & Ismail, 2009). The origin of the idea of human capital goes back to at least Adam Smith who in the wealth of nations suggested that investment in physical capital through expenditure on machines might have parallels in investment in human capital through expenditures on education and training (Little, 2002). Adam smith idea was later developed by Becker to have modern day human capital theory. Becker’s (1993) illustrates this domain. Becker argues that there are different kinds of capitals that include schooling, a computer training course, expenditures on medical care. In addition, in fact, lectures on the virtues of punctuality and honesty are capital too. In the true sense, they improve health, raise earnings, or add to a person’s appreciation of literature over a lifetime. Consequently, it is fully in keeping with the capital concept as traditionally defined to say that expenditures on education, training, and medical care, etc., are investment in capital. These are not simply costs but investment with valuable returns that can be calculated. From the perspective of Classical Economic Theory, human capital considers labour as a commodity that can be traded in terms of purchase and sale. This classical theory very much focuses on the exploitation of labour by capital (Marimuthu, *et al.*, 2009). However, unlike the meaning traditionally associated with the term labour, human capital refers to the knowledge, expertise, and skill one accumulates through education and training. Emphasizing the social and economic importance of human capital theory, Becker (1993) noted the most valuable of all capital is that investment in human being. Becker distinguishes firm-specific human capitals from general-purpose human capital. Examples of firm-specific human capital include expertise obtained through education and training in management information systems, accounting procedures, or other expertise specific to a particular firm (Marimuthu, *et al.*, 2009).

General-purpose human capital is knowledge gained through education and training in areas of value to a variety of firms such as generic skills in human resource development. Regardless of the application, Becker considers education and training to be the most important investment in human capital. Figure 2.1 presents the key relations in human capital theory and the assumptions underlying these relationships

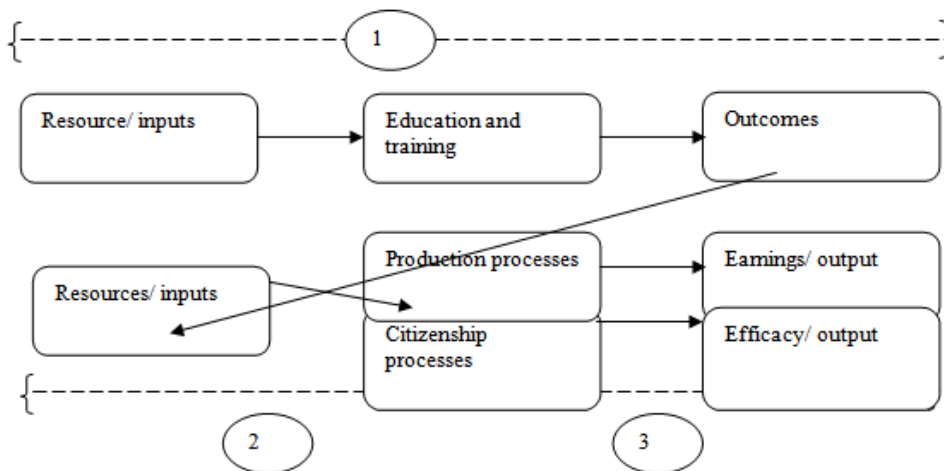


Figure 1 Model of Human Capital Theory (Swanson & Holton, 2001: 110)

Relationship 1 represents the concept of production functions as applied to education and training. The key assumption underlying this relationship is that investment in education and training results in increased

learning. Relationship 2 represents the human capital relationship between learning and increased productivity. The key assumption underlying this relation is that increased learning does, in fact, result in increased productivity. Relationship 3 represents the human capital relationship between increased productivity and increased wages and business earnings. The key assumption underlying this relationship is that greater productivity does, in fact, result in higher wages for individuals and earnings for businesses. In conclusion, human capital theory does contribute to the organizational advantages and profits. The entire human capital continuum represented is assessed using return-on-investment analysis or cost-benefit analysis. The human capital theory is an important agent for boosting firm performance. Thus, this study has capitalized on this theory for arguing that human capital becomes an element in ensuring strategy implementation (Swanson & Holton, 2001). In relation to this study, human capital theory posits that education increases people's skills, and in turn productivity, higher productivity is subsequently rewarded by means of higher earnings. Similarly, human capital theory states that work experience is expected to contribute to people's knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) and lead to higher productivity and higher earnings. This research uses these two key demographic characteristics, which underlie the concept of human capital, to proxy for the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs).

III. Review of Literature

Employee training refers to the process to obtain or transfer KSA (knowledge, skills and abilities) needed to carry out a specific activity or task; therefore, benefits of training and development both for employer and employees are strategic in nature and hence much broader (Sattar, 2011). Employee training aims to change behaviour at work place in order to increase efficiency and higher performance standards. It is defined as function that includes all forms of planned learning experiences and activities whose purpose is to effect changes in performance and other behaviour through the acquisition of new knowledge, skills, beliefs, values and attitudes (Kyprianou, Kasket, 1998 in Chandra, 2009). Chandra used a case study research design to investigate human resource management practices at Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, the researcher utilised a questionnaire which is not applicable in case study methodology. The current study utilised questionnaires and interview to collect data on the influence of employee competencies on strategy implementation.

In the implementation process, the nature of the information exchange relationship determines the conditions under which an employee receives knowledge or has experience using the new idea (Enz, 2012). Several different information-exchange strategies can be used, including those focused on individuals, typically, individual counseling by managers or change agents, and those at the group level, such as staff meetings, cross-functional teams, and focus groups. Other strategies for implementing innovations noted in the literature include creating a crisis to enlist support and critical analysis of problems with current approaches (Kotter 1996 in Enz, 2012). The study determined how training was provided at Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission employees in western Kenya. Schmidt and Keil (2013) suggested that competent employees training and their capabilities is essential ingredient for successful strategy implementation. They are important for the organization to develop human resource competencies. The organization needs to attract employees with necessary experience, technical skills and other soft skills (Badri, Bashiri, & Hejazi, 2013). The skills need to vary depending on the type of strategy the firm is planning to implement. Johnson, Scholes and Whittington (2005) further suggested that a strong management team with the right skills that works closely is important in strategy implementation. Firms need to challenge their employees to innovate and be creative, and motive them to upgrade their skills continuously (Kaifeng, Lepak, Jia, & Baer, 2012).

In the implementation of strategy hiring and retaining competent employees helps to develop core competencies. However, Enz (2012) cautions that the organization's core competency emerges incrementally as the firm goes about business. It is prudent to be proactive about what implementation of strategy entails and build competencies and capabilities that are scalable. Building core competencies is an inter-regional effort. Each department performs complementary activities across the organization's value chain. In the implementation of strategy, the management team's role is to concentrate enough resources and management attention on activities that strengthen employees' core competencies (Johnson Scholes & Whittington, 2005). Badri, Bashiri and Hejazi (2013) also acknowledged that the effectiveness of strategy implementation is, at least in part, affected by the quality of people involved in the process. Peng and Litteljohn (2001) defined quality as capabilities, skills, attitudes, experiences and other distinctiveness of people that a specific task or position requires. Prahalad and Hamel (1990) and Barney (2001) core capabilities as complex bundles of skills and collective learning, knowledge and technological know-how exercised through organizational processes that ensure co-ordination of functional activities and give a special advantage which in turn enhance the implementation of strategy and firms performance, creates synergy and competitive advantage. Prahalad and Hamel and Barney research focused on capabilities by inspiring complex bundle of skills on employee

performance while the current study determined how employee training influence strategy implementation at Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission.

Dewett, Whittier and Williams (2007) conducted a secondary research in United States by conducting a systematic review of the literature on three main types of influences on implementation: organizational, innovation, and human. From the review, they found out that managers could most influence human factors in the implementation process. This study conducted a primary research by determining how employee level of training influences strategy implementation. In a study of hotels and restaurants in China, researchers found that training customer-contact employees to possess multiple skills was significantly related to both incremental and radical innovation (Chang, Gong & Shum, 2011). If firms are to respond to the changes in their market and business environment, they will need to identify the type of staff and the skills they require in the future and these may be different to those in the past (Meyer, 2005). This process is identified as important, an often overlooked function in many industries. It helps identify roles, individuals and competencies that are leaving (Bersin & Associates, 2007).

Enz (2012) examined the relationship between innovation success and the frequency of use of various strategies for the implementation of two specific nationwide service innovations in the North American hotels of a global lodging chain. The data for the study was gathered via surveys from the general manager of each hotel. A mix of execution strategies including implementation by persuasion, leader intervention, participation, and even edict were linked to service innovation success. Participative employee-centered implementation strategies emerged as the most critical in the diffusion of service innovations. The limiting factor in Enz study is that it was conducted in hospitality industry that has different operational models with IEBC. Baird and Wang (2010) examined the influence of organizational (business unit size, training, and link to rewards) and cultural (innovation, team work, and outcome orientation) factors on the extent of adoption of employee empowerment. Data was collected by survey questionnaire distributed to one business unit within 250 manufacturing organizations. The results revealed a moderate level of employee empowerment in Australian organizations, with the cultural factor, teamwork, and the organizational factors, training and link to rewards, found to have a significant impact on the overall level of adoption of employee empowerment. The level of training was found to be associated with the level of collaboration and formalization dimensions of empowerment. The study was associated with the use of the survey approach, including the simplification of questions, inability to probe answers, issues of control as to who completes the survey, and ensuring response rates.

Kihanya (2013) argued that as far as human resource skills influence on the implementation of business strategies in Public Sector Firms in Kenya is concerned, organizations need to attract employees with necessary experience, technical skills and other soft skills (Cox, 1999 in Kihanya, 2013). The skills need to vary depending on the type of strategy the firm is planning to implement. Kihanya (2013) investigated challenges influencing the implementation of business strategies in public sector firms in Kenya: A survey of parastatals in the Ministry of Agriculture. The study adopted a descriptive research design and involved a sample size of eight (8) parastatals. Data was collected through a questionnaire from a sample size of sixty five (65) respondents that was obtained using census procedure. Kihanya found out that lack of skilled personnel result to failure in business strategy implementation in public sector organizations and the management team needs to take the effort to screen and evaluate potential employees and make sure these recruits can work within the organization's work environment and culture. The study by Kihanya used a census method that is wrong considering that a sample was selected. Therefore, the sampling selection method was not correct. This study selected respondents from different regions (Kakamega, Bungoma and North Rift) based on the proportion of each using stratified random sampling. Obenge, Okibo, Nyangau, Ondieki and Nyongesa (2014) research in Kisii county findings indicated that the trainings had a major impact on the way strategic management was handled in schools and especially in terms of renewed commitment as the school administration was now better equipped in terms of understanding what was required of them making it easier for them to relate to the plans and own them. 61 (91%) acknowledged having heard of and attended these trainings and that the trainings had a major influence on how they handled issues dealing with strategic plans. Considering that the population of the study was large, a smaller sample was chosen (134) to represent an actual population of 664 using the rule of the thumb method. The study used a sample size determination formula in getting the correct and appropriate sample to determine the extent to which employees training and skills development affected strategy implementation at Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission.

IV. Materials and Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The target population for the study involved employees and regional managers from Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission North Rift, Bungoma and Kakamega regions. In the sampling procedure, the study used probability and non-probability sampling techniques. Purposive sampling technique was used to select regional managers. Stratified random sampling technique was used to categorize the electoral officers into various regions they come from to form

three strata; North Rift (65), Bungoma (37) and Kakamega (37). The study utilised questionnaire and interview schedule to collect data. Data was analysed through use of descriptive; frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation. Inferential analysis was also conducted by use of Karl Pearson correlation and non-parametric chi square to determine the degree (positive/negative) to which employee training influence strategy implementation at Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission.

V. Results

Employees Training Effect on Strategy Implementation at IEBC

The study investigated how employees’ level of training since being employed at IEBC has affected strategy implementation. Before a new strategic plan is rolled out, employees are supposed to undergo training on the specifics, goals, targets and even purpose of strategic plan for the purpose of improving organizational processes. At first, the respondents were asked to indicate the frequency to which they had undergone training on the implementation of strategic plan in their organisation. Their responses are provided in Figure 1.

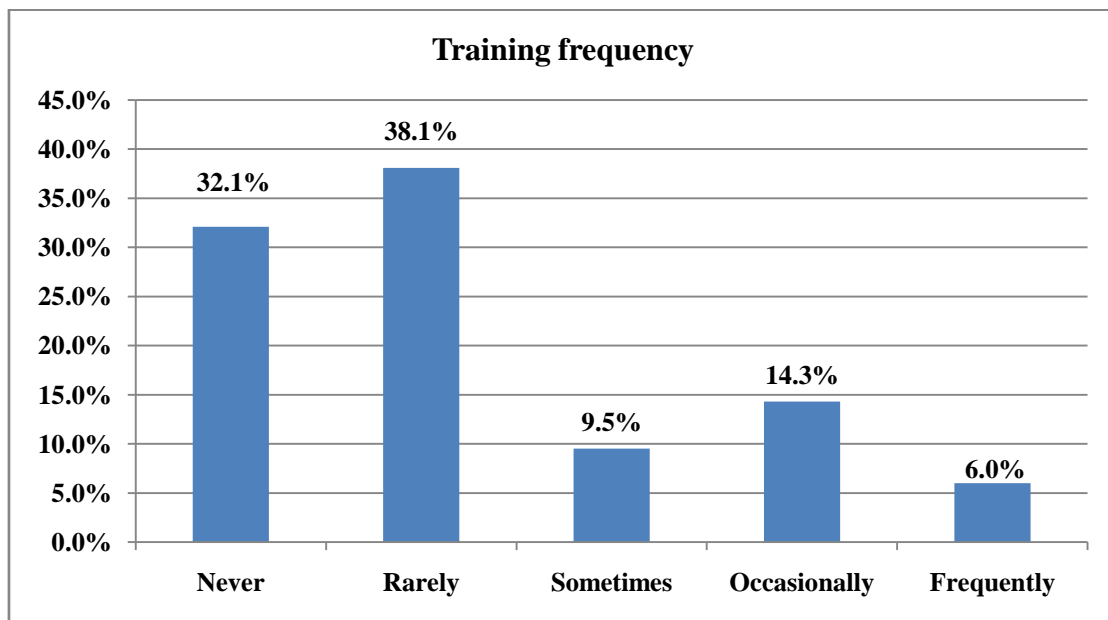


Figure 1 Frequency to which employees have attended training on strategic plan implementation

Result show that 27 (32.1%) of respondents admitted that they have never been provided with training on strategy implementation at their organisation. However, 32 (38.15) said that they have been attending on rare occasions, 8 (9.5%) said they attend sometimes, 12 (14.3%) said they attend occasionally and only 5 (6.0%) indicated that they frequently attend those training events. The finding implies that majority of employees working at IEBC have rarely been provided with training on strategic plan and this could explain for its moderate implementation level as seen in Figure 1. The result is in agreement with a research conducted in Migori by Kipkorir (2013) who established that the organisation had no emphasis on developing the capacity of their employees towards high level achievement of strategic targets. Organisations will not achieve its desired outcomes unless employees have the skills and abilities needed to handle the tasks and decisions at hand. Hence, the level of training is considered important in respect to providing employees with the skills (team work, problem solving, communication, and interpersonal) that facilitate (Baird & Wang, 2010) When asked through open ended question on the aspects of training. They mentioned that they were trained on; strategic plan implementation, Biometric Voter Registration, risk assessment, electoral operations, conflict resolution, finance, procurement, teamwork, data entry, result based management, monitoring, evaluation, planning among others. The study asked the respondents to indicate the place (venue) to which training in their organisation occur most as; at group level, regional staff meetings, cross-functional teams or focus groups. Their responses are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1 Place (s) where employee training takes place

Location	Frequency	Percent
Group level	16	19.0
Regional staff meetings	39	46.4
Cross-functional teams	19	22.6
Focus groups	8	9.5

Workshops	2	2.4
Total	84	100.0

It is seen that most 39 (46.4%) of respondents indicated that employees training usually occur during regional staff meetings, 19 (22.6%) said that it happens through cross-functional teams, 16 (19.0%) said that it happens at group level, 8 (9.5%) indicated that it usually happens in focus group discussions and 2 (2.4%) said that it happens in workshops. This implies that during regional meetings among staff, which is when various training events are held by IEBC. To test the degree to which respondents perceived the influence of training on strategy implementation, they were asked to rate their level of agreement on five statements measured on a Likert scale of five; the results are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2 Respondents perception on the influence of training on strategy implementation

Perception	SD		D		U		A		SA	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
The organization attracts employees with necessary experience, technical skills and soft skills therefore speeding strategy implementation	3	3.6	4	4.8	1	1.2	47	56.0	29	34.5
Employees are trained in multiple skill within our organization which ensures they fulfill their targets	13	15.5	23	27.4	12	14.3	27	32.1	9	10.7
Training needs assessment is conducted before employees participate in any training program to ensure they deliver their mandates effectively	14	16.7	24	28.6	10	11.9	25	29.8	11	13.1
Organization is always committed to constant employee training to speed strategy implementation	9	10.7	32	38.1	18	21.4	22	26.2	3	3.6
Opportunities for further training at our organization are open to all employees providing room for improved productivity	18	21.4	28	33.3	17	20.2	17	20.2	4	4.8

Key: f=frequency, %=Percent, SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, U=Undecided, A=Agree and SA=Strongly Agree.

When asked as to whether their organisation attracted employees with necessary experience, technical and soft skills for the purpose of speeding strategy implementation, 3 (3.6%) strongly disagreed, 4 (4.8%) disagreed, 1 (1.2%) were undecided, 47 (56.0%) agreed and 29 (34.5%) strongly agreed. The results show that more than 90.5% of respondents agreed (M=4.13 and SD=0.92) that when their organization attract qualified and competent personal, this will speed up strategy implementation. Secondly, results show that 13 (15.5%) strongly disagreed and 23 (27.4%) disagreed that employees are trained in multiple skills in their organisation which ensures they fulfill their targets. However, 12 (14.3%) remained neutral, 27 (32.1%) agreed and 9 (10.7%) strongly agreed with the statement. from the results, respondents appear to be divided (M=2.95 and SD=1.28) which suggest that some (42.9%) disagreed with the statement and only 42.8% approved the statement. the findings therefore shows that training employee in multiple sometimes will lead to effective strategy implementation while in some cases will not. This showed that a careful assessment needs to be conducted before deciding on training different categories of employees on different skills. The study findings coincide with Baird and Wang (2010) found out that training can assist by helping employees to understand management initiatives, and by educating and preparing them with the knowledge and skills they require.

Result of the research also revealed that 14 (16.7%) of respondents strongly disagreed and 24 (28.6%) disagreed that training needs assessment test is conducted at their organisation before anyone participate in training to ensure they delivery their mandates effectively. Only 25 (29.8%) agreed and 11 (13.1%) strongly agreed that TNA is usually done before commencement of training programme to employees. The result also showed that the organisation does not always conduct TNA while in some instances (42.9%); they conduct TNA before allowing employees to participate in the training process. Moreover, the 9 (10.7%) respondents also strongly disagreed and 32 (38.1%) that their organisation is always committed to constant employee training to speed up strategy implementation, 18 (21.4%) were undecided, 22 (26.2%) agreed and 3 (3.6%) disagreed with the statement. computed mean was 2.73 with standard deviation scores of 1.07 which implies that sometimes the organisation is committed to provision of employee training during strategy implementation while in some cases it is not committed. The non-regular commitment by the organisation may hamper effective strategy implementation in organisation.

Close to half (48.8%) disagreed with the statement implying that the reason for average implementation in strategic plan could be as a result of non-commitment by IEBC top management towards employee training. When asked as to whether opportunities for further training at IEBC were open to all employees, 18 (21.4%) strongly disagreed, 28 (33.3%) disagreed, 17 (20.2%) were undecided, 17 (20.2%) agreed and 4 (4.8%) strongly

agreed. The result suggests that more than half 54.7% of employees perceived that the opportunities for training at IEBC were not open and only a quarter (25.0%) of employees said that the opportunity for training was open to all employees. This therefore showed that improved productivity (employee output) is affected during strategy implementation because not employees are accorded equal opportunity for further training. The general respondents views on how employee training affected strategy implementation at IEBC is given in Figure 2.

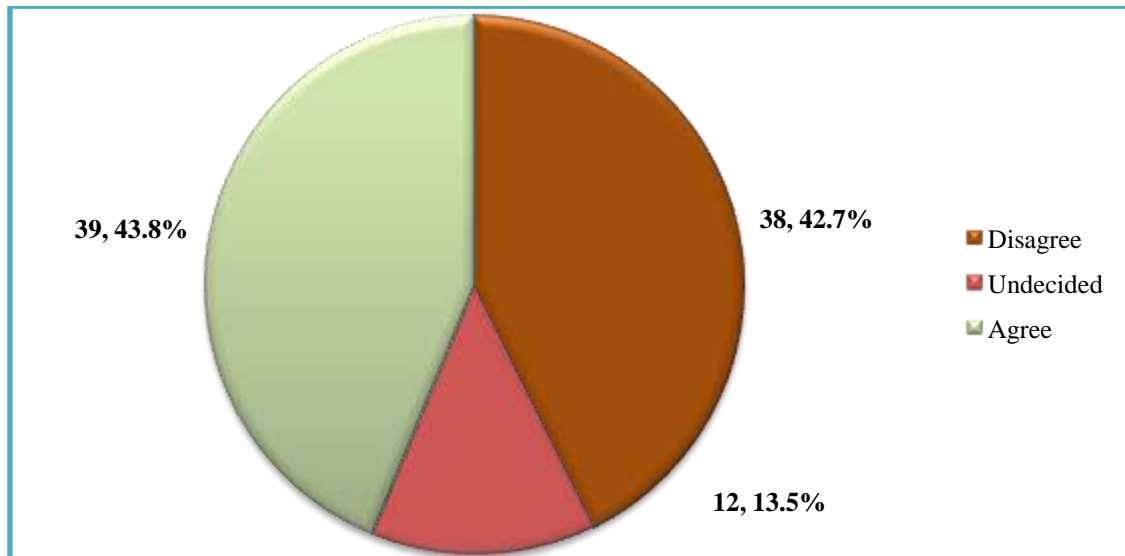


Figure 2 Whether employee training at IEBC influence strategy implementation

Result show that only 39 (43.8%) of respondents agreed that employee training at IEBC influenced strategy implementation, 12 (13.5%) were undecided and 38 (42.7%) disagreed with the statement. the result therefore shows that respondents are undecided on the contribution of training towards improving strategy implementation process. The results further reveal that the way training is planned, conducted and executed could be the reason for its moderate contribution to effective strategy implantation at IEBC.

The hypothesis stated that:

H₀₁ There is no significant relationship between employee training skills and strategy implementation at Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission

To test the hypothesis, a Karl Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient was computed at 0.01 significance level. This was done by taking the independent predictors of frequent to which employees attended training on strategy implementation and the scores on the strategy implementation as dependent measures which were on ordinal scale of five. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Hypothesis 1 testing

		Employee training	Strategy implementation
Employee training	Pearson Correlation	1	.327**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	84	84
Strategy implementation	Pearson Correlation	.327**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	84	84

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

The results shows that there exist a significant positive relationship ($r=0.327$ and $p=0.002$) between employee level of training and strategy implementation at IEBC. Based on the statistics above, the first null hypothesis is rejected ($p<0.01$) leading to the conclusion that there exist significant positive relationship between employee level of training and effective strategy implementation at IEBC. Employees who receive such training will be more competent and confident in making decisions. In addition, employees who are equipped with decision-making skills are more likely to be trusted by management and thereby delegated decision-making power (Baird & Wang, 2010). This implies that when training needs assessment is conducted before actual training is provided, when management is committed to provide training and when opportunities for training are equal and open to all, there is likelihood that IEBC strategic plan will be realised.

VI. Discussions

Result showed that most (38%) of the respondents reported that they rarely attend training. The training was conducted during staff meetings. This showed that the management had not developed appropriate training programme. The results coincide with Kipkorir (2013) who found out that local authorities in Migori rarely provided training opportunities to their employees. This is in contrast to a research conducted by Obenge *et al.*, (2014) that showed that majority of respondents had attended training courtesy of Ministry of Education. Moreover, the respondents reported that the organization attracts employees with necessary experience, technical skills and soft skills therefore speeding strategy implementation. However, the results of the study showed that organisation is rarely committed to constant employee training and opportunities for further training at IEBC were not open to all employees. This showed why the study obtained weak positive correlations ($r=3.27$) between employee training and strategy implementation. This affected strategy implementation at IEBC. Obadha *et al.*, (2013) concurred that bundles of skills and collective learning, knowledge and technological know-how give an organization competitive advantage and process value to enhance the implementation of operation strategy.

VII. Conclusions and Recommendations

The employee competencies are crucial in facilitating the achievement of organisational goals through the effective strategy implementation. Employee knowledge and skills developed through regular and constant training also influence the effective implementation. Since the effects of the design and implementation of a firm's strategy activities are embodied through all employees, their knowledge, attitude, level of training, capabilities and commitment skills directly affect the quality and performance organisation. Arguably, more knowledgeable and skilful employees will have competencies to understand and enact a variety of practices, such as those designed for an organisation specific strategy. Conversely, if the knowledge and skills of employees are limited, it is likely their behaviours and performance will be adversely affected, and their acceptance and utilisation of practices will be impeded. Therefore, it becomes difficult to expect the employees to accomplish the series of activities internally consistent, or congruent with the organisation strategy. There is need for IEBC to regularly conduct training for its employees based on their training needs to ensure that they improve on their skills and knowledge helpful during strategy implementation.

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