ISSN 2350-1049

International Journal of Recent Research in Interdisciplinary Sciences (IJRRIS)
Vol. 12, Issue 2, pp: (23-36), Month: April - June 2025, Available at: www.paperpublications.org

Strategic Workforce Management and Operational Performance of Soft Drink Manufacturing Firms in Eldoret City County, Kenya

Martin Barasa Sirengo [1*], Dr. Elizabeth Nambuswa Makokha (PhD) [1.2]

[1]School of Business and Entrepreneurship (SOBE), Department of Business. Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, P.O. Box 62000 - 00200, Nairobi Kenya

[2]College of Human Resource Development, Department of Entrepreneurship and Procurement Leadership and Management. Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, P.O. Box 62000 - 00200, Nairobi Kenya

DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15383378

Published Date: 11-May-2025

Abstract: **The purpose of this study was to establish the effect of effect of strategic workforce management on the operational performance of soft drinks manufacturing firms in Eldoret City County. This research was based on the stakeholder theory to explain the relationship between the study variables. The study intended to collect primary data using questionnaires. A descriptive survey design was adopted. The target population include all the 64 soft drinks manufacturing firms operating in Eldoret City County as at December 2021. A census was conducted on all the 64 soft drinks manufacturing firms. The unit of observation was heads of operations and human resource unit of each soft drinks manufacturing firm. The total target was therefore be 128 respondents. Information assembled was evaluated using descriptive and inferential statistics ranging from frequencies, percentages, correlation and regression. Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 24 was used for data analysis. . Based on the findings, the study concluded that that strategic workforce management has significant effect on the operational performance of soft drink manufacturing firms in Uasin Gishu County.β1=0.773, p value= 0.000). The relationship was considered significant since the p value 0.000 was less than the significant level of 0.05. The study came up with the following recommendations; the soft drink manufacturing firm's management should have a good relationship with major suppliers, employees and management who are ISO certified and and maintain long term relationship with suppliers as suppliers. There should be a criteria for supplier selection and strategic partnerships between the company and suppliers**

Keywords: **strategic workforce management, operational performance.**

1. INTRODUCTION

Quality is critical element especially where production or service delivery is concerned. This is because it determines customer satisfaction (Bremer, 2016). Though the term has evolved overtime resulting to divergent views on the term, renowned quality gurus in the likes of Deming, Juran, Crosby, Feigenbaum, Ishikawa and Garvin believed that quality is when there is variety reduction, continuous improvement of products/services and zero defect (Bremer, 2016). Though there is diversity in the definition of quality from different scholars, the commonly agreed definition portrays quality as simply the fitness of use of a product or service (Bremer, 2016; Calingo, 2014; Nzioka, 2016). Many organizational leaders identify quality as an aggressive competitive weaponr (Prunet et al., 2024). Empirical evidence (Lu et al., 2022) suggests that as quality increases so does productivity and profitability. Studies (Gluck, Kaufman, & Walleck, 2017) have shown that

improvement of product quality has a strong relationship to increased market share. Recent studies (Garvin, 2017) suggest that quality is a management function and it is a fundamental component of competitive strategy. A major emphasis on the thinking quality gurus is that quality can be managed only when the top management gets involved. Top management has the duty to make innovative decisions, commit resources to support innovation and continuous improvement. This is what brings the aspect of strategic approach to quality (Bremer, 2016). This means managing quality will involve the formulation of strategies, setting of goals and objectives, developing action plans, implementing plans and utilizing control systems for monitoring feedback as well as taking corrective actions (Uko, 2018).

Strategic quality management has received increased attention at the global arena and leaders of manufacturing firms must adopt some strategic quality practices that support performance. Strategic quality management practices in this regard is concerned with improving quality of goods through integration of key stakeholder efforts of suppliers, customers, employees, competitors and the government in order to meet the expectations of the consumer (Garvin, 2017). Other studies (Uko, 2018) have identified the core concepts of strategic quality management practices as customer focus, strategic benchmarking, leadership, continuous improvement, strategic quality planning, design quality, speed and prevention, people participation and partnership with suppliers and fact-based management. For the purpose of this study, strategic customer management practices, strategic workforce management practices, strategic supplier management practices and strategic benchmarking practices will be discussed to determine the relationship with firm operational performance.

Some other elements of strategic quality management principles, guidelines and techniques are six sigma, business process re-engineering, learning organization, ISO standards among others (Uko, 2018). Six Sigma is a self- propelling continuous improvement technique while business process re-engineering (BPR) is a tool to make a business process efficient in time and cost. It is the fundamental rethinking and radical redesign of business processes to achieve dramatic improvements in critical, contemporary measures of performance, such as cost, quality, service and speed (Upadhaya, Munir & Blount, 2014). As far as quality is concerned, a learning organization has been viewed by some scholars (Rureri, 2018) as an organization that facilitates the learning of all its members and continuously transforms itself.

With ISO standards, an organization is able to improve its manufacturing process, its service or documentation procedure and has all the requirements for standardization and quality assurance (Rureri, 2018). Adoption of strategic quality practices has seen a number of manufacturing firms in the global arena benefit from improved quality, employee engagement, improved working relationships, customer and employee satisfaction, productivity, effective communication, profitability and increased market share (Rureri, 2018). In a nutshell, strategic quality management practices permit organizations to be committed to quality and customer retention/satisfaction as well as continuously improving their operations. Operational performance entails having an efficient flow of operations in the organization such as reducing delivery lead time, reducing inventory and ensuring optimal level in the machines (Zhu, Sarkis & Lai, 2018). In order for organization to be competitive they have to make use of the different performance objectives. They are the cost, quality, speed, dependability and flexibility In order for the firms to strive to remain competitive through strategic quality management practices, an understanding of the complexity and dynamism of operational performance of these firms has potential to provide the platform upon which the success or failure of this important industry could be judged.

Strategic quality management practices can deliver a wide range of benefits which enhance competitiveness and performance of supply chain partners (Hudnurkar, Jakhar & Rathod, 2017). Some of these benefits are; innovative products, cost management, improved efficiency and risk management as well as delivering incremental business value to customers (Giannakis & Papadopoulos, 2016). Effective strategic quality management practices can create an environment that promotes trust between organizations based on a shared understanding and communication that promotes operational performance (Lavastre, Gunasekaran & Spalanzani, 2019). Evidently, strategic quality management practices are globally being appreciated by many firms both in manufacturing and service because companies are aggressively seeking ways to improve the products/service they offer (Marzooq, H., & Nisa, N (2022). A number of buyers require suppliers to embrace strategic management practices and this has given rise to the global adoption strategic quality management practices (Ogbari & Borishade, 2015). Studies have shown that in the global business environment, quality has become the most important driver of competition (T. Prunet et al., 2024).

A key aspect for firms in the global business to make strategic quality part of their practices is the benefit of increased international trade, domestic market share, customer satisfaction, the need for customer/supplier partnership, increase in external pressures, the ever changing consumer demands and preferences and government pressures (Javed, 2015). One of

the broadly referred studies on strategic quality management practices are the International quality study done by the American Quality Foundation. According to Kaynak, (2017) the strategic quality management practices have a fundamental impact on the performance of most of the U.S. companies. Chief Executive officers (CEOs) in most of the companies U.S. link quality closely with profitability (Owen, 2017). As such, organizations have to spend time and effort on the implementation of strategic quality management practices and include quality in their strategic planning process (T. Prunet et al., 2024). The studies further suggest that benefits of quality improvement are not only reflected on operational cost reduction but also on the increase of business profits. While the connection between operational performance and strategic quality management practices has been studied globally, there remains no proof of direct causation. The mechanism for improving results has been the subject of much research. Lo, Yeung, and Cheng (2017), identified operational improvements such as cycle time reduction and inventory reductions as following from certification. Internal process improvements in organizations lead to externally observable improvements. The benefit of increased international trade and domestic market share, in addition to the internal benefits such as customer satisfaction, interdepartmental communications, work processes, and customer/supplier partnerships derived, far exceeds any and all initial investment.

A number of studies revealed that a large percentage of companies found their strategic quality management efforts failed to live up to their expectations mostly due to lack of effective work force management and low supplier management (Helmold, M. 2023).. Therefore, it appears that quality practices are important for continuous survival of organizations. Given the complex relationship between growth, costs and quality, and with the increasing competitive, business survival pressure and the dynamic, changing customer-oriented environment, strategic quality management practices could be a major strategic issue for the survival of organizations in the manufacturing sector (Zhu & Sarkis, 2018). In most of the African economies, manufacturing sector has been found to contribute more to the GDP, employment levels and the exports (Marina, 2015). A number of setbacks have faced the sector in terms of infrastructure, sub-standard imports and high cost of energy (Musonnafa, et al., 2022). Managers of the African manufacturing firms constantly seek to find a way of having a competitive advantage over the others (Aminga, 2015). Thus, a study on the relationship between strategic quality management practices and organizational performance is critical for organizations and researchers to better understand the effects of strategic quality management practices onto different levels of organizational performance (Yehuala, A. 2023).

The concept of strategic quality management practices became adopted in some African economies like Burkina Faso in early 1990s (Rosca, 2015). Following the advent of privatization due to structural adjustment programs, this brought fundamental changes in management practices. Quality management practices became embedded in the manufacturing sector and presented a critical part of the success of manufacturing firms (Abbas, J. 2020). The quality management practices put strong emphasis on empowerment of employers, customer service and charismatic leadership (Chebet, M. M. 2020). Through progressive discussions on quality management, most of the manufacturers in Burkina Faso learned about a growing interest in management concepts such as quality circles, continuous improvement and finally total quality management (TQM) (Hassis, et al., 2023). Quality management practices were taken as a firm- wide management thinking of continuously enhancing the worth of products, services as well as processes by focusing on customers' needs and expectations (Prunet et al., 2024).

In the late 1990s, the concept of strategic quality management practices gained ground when the Japanese firms operating in Burkina Faso introduced quality control circles as a bottom – up management strategy (Karsten & Pennink, 2015). This stimulated the desire to initiate a far-reaching change in most of the firms' management practices. As such, strategic quality management practices was embraced as a new way of operating Burkina Faso business organizations particularly those operating in agro- industry, food and industrial production (Helmold, M. 2023). Locally, strategic quality management practices has been at the center of every manufacturing company (Nzioka, 2016). The business environment in which firms operate today is constantly changing and this has necessitated firms to adapt to such changes for survival and continuance meeting customer needs (Kimani, & Matata, 2015). Adoption and use of SQM practices in the manufacturing sector in Kenya is seen as a reliable way that organizations can use to marshal customer satisfaction at lower cost, minimized wastage and superior quality (Janet, M., & Mirioba, G. 2024). In Kenya, the adoption of SQM practices have been done in firms such cement manufactures where process reengineering, ISO certification and six sigma have been used as a way of improving operational performance (Kimani, & Matata, 2015).

Studies by Kiprotich and Chebet (2017) have indicated that adoption of quality management practices has resulted to prompt delivery of services, quality of the products had improved in terms of reduced customer complaints' and the ability of product to meet the local and international standards. Further studies (Njenga & Kidombo, 2017). have shown that

implementation of strategic quality management practices had a positive influence on the organizations' return on assets thus improving its performance (Mwangi, et al., 2021). Past studies (Kimani, & Matata, 2015) suggest that quality management is any practice that produces better products while decreasing cost and increasing consumer satisfaction levels. Ntwiga, et al., (2021) states that when quality management practices are applied in the manufacturing firms, it is able to produce positive effects within the organizational networking (Njenga & Kidombo, 2017). The concept of SQM has also been incorporated in the Kenyan education sector and found to bear positive results in performance of students (Chepket & Cheluget, 2017).

Soft drinks manufacturing firms globally have incorporated the need of having strategic quality management practices due to the increased global competition as it's an enabler of operational excellence (Braunscheidel & Suresh, 2019). However, there are challenges facing strategic quality management practices. Lack of continuous process improvement and low supplier management along the supply chain within an organization leads to ineffective cooperation within the supply chain link thus negatively affecting operational performance (Fawcett, Jones & Fawcett, 2018). Simchi-Levi, Kaminsky and Simchi-Levi (2018), observed poor performance, high operation costs, reduced service level, low utilization of resources, and not responding to customers' expectations are because of lack of strategic quality management practices in organization activities. Thus the need of soft drink manufacturing firms to adopt strategic quality management practices.

The soft drink industry in Kenya is part of the wider economy employing about two million people and contributing about 3% to the GDP (Aila, 2015). The industry operates in a perfect competition and as a result the market becomes overcrowded. The players in the industry have to content with fierce competition and diminishing profits (Kimani, & Matata, 2015). There is evidence from past studies (Gundi, 2018) to suggest that the soft drink industry in Kenya is one of the fast growing sectors in Kenya with both local and multinational companies thus making it one of the very competitive industries. Clearly, the business environment in which the industry operates is constantly changing and this has necessitated the firms to adapt to such changes for survival and meet customer needs (Kimani, & Matata, 2015). Being part of the food industry, the conditions for operations are quite stringent and the manufacturers are expected to consistently adhere to quality requirements that guarantee customer satisfaction (Aila, 2015). Previous studies (Wambua, 2017) have demonstrated how most of these firms have tried to create a competitive edge over their rivals by diversifying their products, developing new markets and penetrating the market through aggressive promotions. These efforts have borne insignificant results in terms of their operational performance - which begs the question as to whether the firms are applying the right strategies. Though strategic quality management practices have been found to have fundamental impact on performance of most of the U.S. companies (Kaynak, 2017) very little is known in the developing economies.

Adoption and use of SQM practices in the manufacturing sector in U.S. was seen as a reliable way that organizations can use to marshal customer satisfaction at lower cost, minimized wastage and superior quality. The studies done in developing economies (Rosca, 2015) on the same field are more concerned with organizational performance. The sought to establish the effect of strategic workforce management on operational performance of soft drink manufacturing firms in Eldoret city County.

2. STRATEGIC WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT

Motivated, committed and involved employees are eager to participate in and contribute to continual improvement within the organization (Prottas, 2019). His other assumption that should be of particular importance to total quality implementers is that in most organizations, the average employees' intellectual potentialities are under-utilized. In today's increasingly competitive market, organizations are continuously searching for new approaches that can cause them to be more flexible, adaptive and competitive. More and more organizations are rediscovering or led to rediscover that their employees are their biggest asset. More and more organizations are moving towards greater employee relations in their decision making process. They realized that attaining greater employee relations requires loosening of and removing well-established structures of control within the organization (Ayoub, Abdallah & Suifan, 2017). An essential element of effective employee relations is teamwork. Organizations need to install quality improvement teams. Small group improvement activities comprise the most fundamental layer of support and can greatly reduce waste-related costs (Oanda, 2018).

Performance is the nature and quality of an organization's behaviors to complete their main tasks and functions and to generate profit and there are two core dimensions of business performance: operational and financial performances (Chavez *et al.*, 2018). Operational performance relates to a company's performance in serving customers in terms of quality, flexibility, on time delivery (Wang *et al.*, 2017). Operational performance can be further classified into cost and service

performances where service performance is also commonly used in measuring operational service performance in terms of the quality of the service, on-time delivery, and flexibility of the service (Daugherty *et al.*, 2018). Zhu and Sarkis (2018) distinguished that organization's operational performances are measured against set indicators or performance objectives. Organization output is measured through performance a measure of manufacturing cycle time, and reliability, which influences the customer satisfaction and market share (Voss, Åhlström, & Blackmon, 2019). According to Slack, Chambers and Johnston (2017), cost, flexibility, dependability, speed, and quality are the main performance objectives for an organization and which are aligned towards customer satisfaction requirements.

Operational performance entails having an efficient flow of operations in the organization such as reducing delivery lead time, reducing inventory and ensuring optimal level in the machines (Zhu, Sarkis & Lai, 2018). In order for organization to be competitive they have to make use of the 5 different performance objectives. This study will focus on the cost, quality and dependability operational performance objectives among the soft drink manufacturing firms in Kenya. Cania (2014) in his study on the impact of strategic human Resource Management on organizational performance observed that organizations need to consider human resource as a tool to gain competitive advantage needed to create appropriate policies and practices. Also, authority and responsibility must involve the entire organization working as a single team and not focus only managers. Alghamdi (2016) in his study towards better understanding of total quality management, found out that human resources barriers poor training of staff, lack of encouragement and morale to staff, lack of recognition and appreciation of staff's success impacted negatively to successful implementation of total quality management.

In the implementation of total quality management systems, human resource management facilitates employees' development by determining skills that will be needed to achieve strategic objectives and facilitates the organizations adaption to its environment. Employee's empowerment is part of total quality management (TQM) philosophy aimed at empowering all employees to seek quality problems and correct them. The new concept of quality, TQM provides incentives for employees to identify quality problems. Employees are rewarded for uncovering quality problems, not punished (Garvin, 2017). In strategic human resources management, education and training are fundamental to total quality because they represent the best way to improve people on continual basis. It is through education and training that people who knew how to work hard, learn how to also work smart (Geotsch & Davis, 2010). Deming cycle theory advocates for cuttingedge methods on the job training, supporting pride of craftsmanship and training and educating everyone in organization. Employees in the organizations also have to embrace team work approach for synergy. In traditional managed organizations, the best competitive efforts are often among departments within the organizations, internal competition tends to use energy that should be focused on improving quality and external competitiveness (Geotsch & Davis, 2010). Total quality management stresses that quality is an organizational effort. To facilitate the solving of quality problems, it places great emphasis on team work. The contributions of teams are considered vital to the success of the company.

Parast et al. (2011), in their study of improving operational and business performance in the petroleum industry through quality management found out that for success to be realized in the improvement of quality culture, staff training is essential component in TQM practices because it has a positive influence on organization performance. Deming theory claimed that training on the job is a key component to create a TQM organization through adopting new methods of training on the work field. Crosby theory in his improvement program to build successful TQM involved the employee education. Employee education includes training employees in order to positively reinforce their function in the quality improvement process. When employees are trained they become visionary and gain skills needed to participate in a dynamic environment. Through employees training, it impacts positively on human resource support. In absence of training in such a process, it is difficult to solve problems and without education, behaviour and attitude change will not take place in an organization. Extensive training delivers greater benefits, where management focuses upon the strategic effectiveness of that training rather than simply upon its ability to enhance employee task effectiveness (Parast et al., 2011). Employee training also offers greater value to the firm in developing human capital if its effects are mediated through the quality management systems. Catalin et al. (2014) believed that to achieve greater success, staff demands a motivation and appreciation of their accomplishments and efforts and that this can only be realized from the leadership's role to recognize and appreciate the staff's achievements which ultimately contributes to greater productivity. Without recognizing staff, they indicated that lack of motivation, satisfaction, recognition of success among employees causes barriers of implementing TQM.

Operational performance is the backbone of organisational performance (Salem, 2003). According to Chavez, Yu, Gimenez, Fynes and Wiengarten (2015), operational performance is the strategic variable that promotes competitive advantage. What is more, it is the foundation of quality practices and the super ordinate performance of organisations (Sharma & Modgil, 2020). Moreover, empirical evidence abound that higher levels of operational performance are known to improve

effectiveness of production activities, product, services and processes quality. (Kaynak, 2008; Chavez et al., 2015), customers or clients satisfaction (Lau, Lee & Jung, 2018), revenue and profit (Santos, Lannelongue, Gonzalez-Benito, 2019). Continuous improvement (known as Kaizen in Japanese) was birthed from a Japanese work method, with the aid of a continuous work method which was adopted from Deming in 1986. Bhuiyan and Baghel (2005) define continuous improvement as a culture of unrelenting improvements. Marin-Garcia, Val and Martin (2008), refer to continuous improvement as a tool for sustaining and enhancing competitiveness. Continuous improvement can be defined as an unceasing effort to enhance products, services or processes (Mudhafar, Mohammed & Konstantinos, 2020). The benefits that continuous improvement can bring to an organisation include: waste reduction (Gallagher, Austin & Chaffyn, 1997), enhanced quality/performance (Goh, 2000), enhanced customer satisfaction (Taylor & Hirst, 2001) and increased employee commitment (Temponi, 2005).

Organizational culture can be defined as a complex mix of shared views, norms and values that affect the organisation's modus operandi and overall performance, making it a possible source of advantage, advancement, and lean practices (Poskien, 2006). According to Alston (2017), organisational culture encompasses all aspects and attributes necessary to undertake and sustain lean process improvement projects. The way things are done in an organisation is shaped by organisational culture, which is one of the most essential aspects of performance (Mann, 2014). Zheng, Yang and McLean (2010) argued that organisational culture is closely related to firm performance. Despite the large spectrum of empirical research concerning the effect of various dimensions of lean adoption on firms' operational performance (Alkhalidi & Abdallah, 2018), very little is known about the nature of the relationship among these variables in the manufacturing sector of developing countries such as Nigeria. The decision to fill this vacuum is a response to the scholarly cry of previous researchers (Babalola, et al., 2019; Afunwa, et al., 2020) who noted that a majority of works regarding the chosen constructs were conducted in different sectors such as banking, telecommunication, small and medium scale enterprises and large scale enterprises of developed countries rather than developing countries. In Nigeria, many problems hinder the operational performance of manufacturing firms and as a result the country is progressing very slowly towards economic diversification. From the economic scenario in Nigeria and the role of the manufacturing sector, the main hurdles that mostly and historically affect its development, growth and operational performance are insecurity, market-misrepresentation, political instability, state-owned monopolies, poor infrastructure and lack of finance (Dipak & Ata, 2003) and too much bureaucracy and excessive corruption (Adenikinju, 2003). Moreover, Sylva (2020) argued that quality, cost, responsiveness (on-time delivery and service flexibility), innovation and safety are the challenges of operational performance in the Nigerian work environment.

3. METHOD

This study adopted a descriptive research design. This study was conducted Eldoret city County. In this respect, the study targeted 10 soft drink manufacturing firms in Eldoret city County, Kenya. The unit of analysis will be the 10 firms while the unit of observation was the heads of operations, marketing section and human resource in the 20 soft drink manufacturing firms in Eldoret city County, Kenya giving a total of 60 respondents selected for the purpose of this study. Since the study population is small, the study worked with entire population which is census.Data collection instrument was questionnaire and other information relevant to the study. A structured questionnaire was administered to the respondents. Piloting was done to test the reliability and validity of the data collection instrument. Once data is collected, it was crosschecked and verified for errors, completeness and consistency. It was then be coded, entered and analysed descriptively using IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SSPS 27). Pearson correlation analysis was used to test the relationship between variables in the study hypotheses. ANOVA and multiple linear regression analysis was adopted computed to determine the statistical relationship between the independent variable and the dependent.

4. DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Effect of Strategic Workforce Management on Operational Performance of Soft Drink Manufacturing Firms in Uasin Gishu County.

The fourth specific objective of the study was to assess the effect of strategic workforce management on operational performance of soft drink manufacturing firms in Uasin Gishu County. The respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement on various statements relating to the effect of strategic workforce management on operational performance of soft drink manufacturing firms in Uasin Gishu County. A 5 point Likert scale was used where 1 symbolized strongly disagree, 2 symbolized disagree, 3 symbolized neutral, 4 symbolized agree and 5 symbolized strongly agree. The results were as presented in Table 4.1.

From the results, the respondents agreed that the company always employee-friendly as it involves employees on high level decision-making. This is supported by a mean of 4.342 (std. dv = 0.811). In addition, as shown by a mean of 3.823 (std. dv = 0.757), the respondents agreed that the organization through installation of quality improvement teams acknowledges and encourages employee suggestions. Further, the respondents agreed that the organization puts a lot of emphasis on teamwork and team building to exchange ideas. This is shown by a mean of 3.913 (std. dv = 0.714). With a mean of 3.834 (std. dv = 0.971), the respondents agreed that the company employees satisfaction is regularly measured. Further, with a mean of 3.814 (std. dv = 0.873), the respondents agreed that the organization's quality circles are recognized as one of the platforms where employees get involved in the continuous improvement in the organization. The respondents respectively agreed that there is strong feeling about participation and teamwork here. This is shown by a mean of 3.687 (std. dv = 0.976).

Table 4.1 Strategic Workforce Management on Operational Performance of Soft Drink Manufacturing Firms in Uasin Gishu County.

	Mean	Std. Deviation
The company always employee-friendly as it involves employees on high level decision-making	4.342	0.811
The organization through installation of quality improvement teams acknowledges and encourages employee suggestions	3.823	0.757
The organization puts a lot of emphasis on teamwork and team building to exchange ideas	3.913	0.714
The company employees satisfaction is regularly measured	3.834	0.971
The organization's quality circles are recognized as one of the platforms where employees get involved in the continuous improvement in the organization	3.814	0.873
There is strong feeling about participation and teamwork here	3.687	0.976
Aggregate	**3.802**	**0.874**

4.2. Effect of Operational Performance of Soft Drink Manufacturing Firms in Uasin Gishu County.

The objective was to assess the effect of operational performance of soft drink manufacturing firms in Uasin Gishu County. The respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement on various statements relating to the effect of operational performance of soft drink manufacturing firms in Uasin Gishu County. A 5 point Likert scale was used where 1 symbolized strongly disagree, 2 symbolized disagree, 3 symbolized neutral, 4 symbolized agree and 5 symbolized strongly agree. The results were as presented in table 4.2.

From the results, the respondents agreed that the organization provides cost effective service to customer. This is supported by a mean of 4.261 (std. dv = 0.957). In addition, as shown by a mean of 3.958 (std. dv = 0.802), the respondents agreed that strategic supplier management reduces administrative costs, average unit manufacturing cost as well as inventory to minimum level to the extent that does not hinder the continuation of work. The respondents further agreed that SQM has led the organization to choses their suppliers on the basis of high-quality, assisted in improving the quality of goods, works and services offered to the beneficiary. This is shown by a mean of 3.803 (std. dv = 0.752). The respondents also agreed that strategic supplier management leads to proper storage conditions according to the specifications, an increased quality information sharing in order to enhance operational efficiency and increased customer satisfaction levels. This is shown by a mean of 3.792 (std. dv = 0.843). With a mean of 3.743 (std. dv = 0.925), the respondents agreed that the firm introduces new products from competitors to ensure competition to meet major customer's requirement. The respondent also agreed that SQM helps organization through suppliers have enhanced more conformity with technical set specifications, high response to dynamic customer needs as well as providing a high level of customer service to its major customers.This is shown by a mean of 3.761 (std. dv = 0.901).

Table 4.2: Operational Performance of Soft Drink Manufacturing Firms in Uasin Gishu County.

	Mean	Std. Deviation
The organization provides cost effective service to customer	4.261	0.957
Strategic supplier management reduces administrative costs, average unit manufacturing cost as well as inventory to minimum level to the extent that does not hinder the continuation of work	3.958	0.802

SQM has led the organization to choses their suppliers on the basis of high-quality, assisted in improving the quality of goods, works and services offered to the beneficiary	3.803	0.752
Strategic supplier management leads to proper storage conditions according to the specifications, an increased quality information sharing in order to enhance operational efficiency and increased customer satisfaction levels	3.792	0.843
The firm introduces new products from competitors to ensure competition to meet major customer's requirement.	3.543	0.925
SQM helps organization through suppliers have enhanced more conformity with technical set specifications, high response to dynamic customer needs as well as providing a high level of customer service to its major customers	3.761	0.901
Aggregate	**3.797**	**0.826**

4.3 Inferential Statistics

Inferential statistics in the current study focused on correlation and regression analysis. Correlation analysis was used to determine the strength of the relationship while regression analysis was used to determine the relationship between dependent variable (the operational performance of soft drink manufacturing firms in Uasin Gishu County and the independent variable (strategic workforce management).

4.3.1 Correlation Analysis

The present study used Pearson correlation analysis to determine the strength of association between independent variables (strategic workforce management option) and the dependent variable (the operational performance of soft drink manufacturing firms in Uasin Gishu County) dependent variable. Pearson correlation coefficient range between zero and one, where by the strength of association increase with increase in the value of the correlation coefficients. The current study employed Taylor (2018) correlation coefficient ratings where by 0.80 to 1.00 depicts a very strong relationship, 0.60 to 0.79 depicts strong, 0.40 to 0.59 depicts moderate, 0.20 to 0.39 depicts weak.

Table 4.3: Correlation Coefficients

		Operational performance of soft drink manufacturing firms	Strategic workforce management
Strategic workforce management	Pearson Correlation	.955**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	55	55

From the results, there was a very strong relationship between strategic workforce management and the operational performance of soft drink manufacturing firms in Uasin Gishu County (r = 0. 955, p value =0.000). The relationship was significant since the p value 0.000 was less than 0.05 (significant level).

4.3.2 Regression Analysis

Multivariate regression analysis was used to assess the relationship between independent variables (strategic workforce management) and the dependent variable (the operational performance of soft drink manufacturing firms in Uasin Gishu County).

Table 4.4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.801	.735	.728	1.119

a. Predictors: (Constant), strategic workforce management.

The model summary was used to explain the variation in the dependent variable that could be explained by the independent variables. The r-squared for the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable was 0.735. This implied that 73.5% of the variation in the dependent variable (the operational performance of soft drink manufacturing firms in Uasin Gishu County) could be explained by independent variables (strategic workforce management).

Table 4.5: Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	201.334	1	50.334	830.943	.001[b]
	Residual	10.237	54	.069		
	Total	211.271	55			

a. Dependent Variable: the operational performance of soft drink manufacturing firms

b. Predictors: (Constant), strategic workforce management

The ANOVA was used to determine whether the model was a good fit for the data. F calculated was 830.943 while the F critical was 2.024. The p value was 0.000. Since the F-calculated was greater than the F-critical and the p value 0.000 was less than 0.05, the model was considered as a good fit for the data. Therefore, the model can be used to predict the influence of strategic workforce management on the operational performance of soft drink manufacturing firms.

Table 4.6: Regression Coefficients

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		**B**	**Std. Error**	**Beta**	**t**	**Sig.**
1	(Constant)	.711	.108		6.583	.000
	Strategic workforce management	.773	.291	1.009	2.656	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Operational performance of soft drink manufacturing firms

Table 4.6 showed that if strategic workforce management are all held constant, the operational performance of soft drink manufacturing firms in Uasin Gishu County would be at 0.711.

The operational performance of soft drink manufacturing firms in Uasin Gishu County = 0.711 + 0.773 (strategic workforce management).

The regression model was as follows:

$Y = 0.711 + 0.773X_4 + \varepsilon$

According to the results, it revealed that strategic workforce management has significant effect on the operational performance of soft drink manufacturing firms in Uasin Gishu County.β1=0.773, p value= 0.000). operational performance. The relationship was considered significant since the p value 0.000 was less than the significant level of 0.05.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The objective of the study was to assess the effect of strategic workforce management on operational performance of soft drink manufacturing firms in Uasin Gishu County. The findings revealed that the company always employee-friendly as it involves employees on high level decision-making and that the organization through installation of quality improvement teams acknowledges and encourages employee suggestions. Further, the findings revealed that the organization puts a lot of emphasis on teamwork and team building to exchange ideas and that the company employee's satisfaction is regularly measured. Additionally the finding indicated that the organization's quality circles are recognized as one of the platforms where employees get involved in the continuous improvement in the organization and that there is strong feeling about participation and teamwork here. Based on the findings, the study concluded that that strategic workforce management has significant effect on the operational performance of soft drink manufacturing firms in Uasin Gishu County.β1=0.773, p value= 0.000). The relationship was considered significant since the p value 0.000 was less than the significant level of 0.05. The study came up with the following recommendations; the soft drink manufacturing firm's management should have a good relationship with major suppliers, employees and management who are ISO certified and and maintain long term relationship with suppliers as suppliers. There should be a criteria for supplier selection and strategic partnerships between the company and suppliers.

REFERENCES

[1] Afunwa, A. P., Agbaeze, E. K., Ike, N. M., & Isichei, E. E. (2020). Lean management and performance of telecommunication firms: The mediating role of workplace structure. *Cogent Business & Management*, 7, 1-20

[2] Alasfoor, M., Alghamdi, S. A., & Abualfaraj, A. F. (2023). Impact of continuous improvement on organizational performance. *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management*, 1(2), 65-78.

[3] Ambula, R., Kariuki, A., & Wasike, S. (2017). Knowledge management and performance in manufacturing firms: The mediating role of learning organization. *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management*, 5(1), 9-28.

[4] Amelia, V. (2020) Librarian Services at Unilak's Main Library Environment: A Dramaturgi Approach. In *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* 469,(1), 012044). IOP Publishing.

[5] Anaza, N. A., & Rutherford, B. (2021). How organizational and employee-customer identification, and customer orientation affect job engagement. *Journal of Service Management*.

[6] Anderson, N., Potočnik, K., & Zhou, J. (2017). Innovation and creativity in organizations: A state-of-the-science review, prospective commentary, and guiding framework. *Journal of management*, *40*(5), 1297-1333.

[7] Ayandele, I. A., & Akpan, A. P. (2019). The Practice, Challenges, and Benefits of Total Quality Management (TQM) in Manufacturing Firms in Nigeria. *International Journal of Economics and Business Management*, *3*(5), 62-74.

[8] Azadeh, M., Farhadi, M., & Mohammadi, M. (2022). The Mediating Role of Employee Engagement in the Relationship Between Continuous Improvement and Organizational Performance" *Academia.edu*

[9] Babalola, O., Ibem, E. O., & Ezema, I. C. (2019). Lean construction: an approach to achieving sustainable built environment in Nigeria. Journal of Physics: Conference Series, 1299, 1- 10.

[10] Björklund, M. (2020). Influence from the business environment on environmental purchasing—Drivers and hinders of purchasing green transportation services. *Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management*, *17*(1), 11-22.

[11] Braunscheidel, M., & Suresh, N. (2019). The organizational antecedents of a firm's supply chain agility for risk mitigation and response. *Journal of Operations Management*, 27(2), 119-140.

[12] Bremer, M.S. (2016). Linking strategic management and ongoing quality improvement. *National Productivity Review*, *8* (1) 11-22.

[13] Cao, M., & Zhang, Q. (2013). *Strategic quality management practices.* London: Springer Verlag.

[14] Chavez, R., Gimenez. C., Fynes. B., Wiengarten, F. & Wantao Yu (2018). Internal lean practices and operational performance: The contingency perspective of industry clockspeed. *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*. 33(5), 562-588.

[15] Chavez, R., Yu, W., Gimenez, C., Fynes, B., & Wiengarten, F. (2015). Customer integration and operational performance: The mediating role of information quality. Decision Support System, 80, 83-95.

[16] Chebet, M. M. (2020). Effects of Supplier Relationship Management Practices on Financial Performance in Selected KTDA Affiliate Tea Processing Firms in Kericho County, Kenya.

[17] Chen, Y., & Zhang, Y. (2021) "The Impact of Continuous Improvement on Financial Performance: A Study of the Moderating Role of Industry Type". *Psychological Assessment*, *33*(10), 973–986. https://doi.org/10.1037/pas0001040

[18] Cooper, D., & Schindler, P. (2018). *Business research methods.* New York: McGraw-Hill Irwin.

[19] Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches.* London: Sage publications Ltd.

[20] Danese P. (2018). Strategic continuous improvement and company performance: A configurational view, Omega, *Elsevier*, 41(6), 1029-1041.

[21] Daugherty, P., Chen, H., Mattioda, D. & Grawe, S. (2018). Marketing/logistics relationships: influence on capabilities and performance. *Journal of Business Logistics*, 30(1), 1-18.

[22] Deming, C. H. (1986). Quality improvement and learning in productive systems. *Management science*, *32*(10), 1301-1315.

[23] Evans, J. R., & Lindsay, W. M. (2018). *Managing for quality and performance excellence*. Cengage Learning.

[24] Fawcett, S., E., Stephen, L., Jones, & Amydee, M., F. (2018). Supply chain trust: The catalyst for collaborative innovation, *Business Horizons*, 55(2), 163–178.

[25] Fontaine, C., Haarman, A., & Schmid, S. (2006). The stakeholder theory. *Edlays education*, *1*, 1-33.

[26] Garvin, D. A. (2017). *Managing quality: The strategic and competitive edge*. Simon and Schuster.

[27] Georgiev, S., & Georgiev, E. (2017). Motivational factors for the adoption of ISO 9001 standards in Eastern Europe: the case of Bulgaria. *Journal of Industrial Engineering and Management (JIEM)*, *8*(3), 1020-1050.

[28] Goffin, K., Lemke, F., & Szwejczewski, M. (2016). An exploratory study of close supplier – manufacturer relationships. *Journal of Operations Management,* 24(2) 189-209

[29] Hammer, M. (2017). The process audit. *Harvard business review*, *85*(4), 111.

[30] Hassan, M., & Alghamdi, S. A. (2022). The Impact of Continuous Improvement on Customer Satisfaction: A Study of the Mediating Role of Service Quality". *ResearchGate.* https.//www.researchgate.net} publication 2894971

[31] Hassis, S. M., Othman, M. A., & Saleh, Y. (2023). The impact of total quality management on corporate sustainability in the manufacturing sector: corporate social responsibility as a mediator. The TQM Journal. https://doi.org/ 10.1108/TQM-08-2022-0259

[32] Helmold, M. (2023). Total Quality Management (TQM). In Virtual and Innovative Quality Management Across the Value Chain: Industry Insights, Case Studies and Best Practices (pp. 27-41). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

[33] Janet, M., & Mirioba, G. (2024). Effect of deployment of total quality management practices to enhance firm competitive advantage of selected manufacturing firms in Industrial Area, Nairobi City County, Kenya. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science (2147- 4478)*, *13*(3), 109–121. Retrieved from https://www. ssbfnet.com/ojs/index.php/ijrbs/article/view/3301

[34] Javed, S. (2015). Impact of top management commitment on quality management. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, *5*(8), 1-5.

[35] Kahn, K.B. & Mentzer, J.T. (2016). Logistics and interdepartmental collaboration, *International Journal of Physical Distribution and Logistics Management*, 26, (8), 6–14.

[36] Kaluarachchi, K. A. S. P. (2018). Organizational culture and total quality management practices: a Sri Lankan case. *The TQM Journal*.

[37] Kanter, R.M. (2017). Collaborative advantage: art of alliances. *Harvard Business Review* 73 (4), 96–108.

[38] Kivayilu, D. K., & Wanjira, J. (2020). Influence of education program as a corporate social responsibility strategy on competitive advantage of soft drink manufacturers in Eldoret city City County, Kenya. *International Academic Journal of Social Sciences and Education*, *2*(2), 88-97.

[39] Lavastre, O., Gunasekaran, A., & Spalanzani, A. (2019). Supply chain risk management in French companies. *Decision Support Systems*, *52*(4), 828-838.

[40] Lee, V. H., Ooi, K. B., Tan, B. I., & Chong, A. Y. L. (2016). A structural analysis of the relationship between TQM practices and product innovation. *Asian Journal of Technology Innovation*, *18*(1), 73-96.

[41] León-Bravo, V., Caniato, F., Caridi, M., & Johnsen, T. (2017), Collaboration for Sustainability in the Food Supply Chain: A Multi-Stage Study in Italy.*Open access article,* Switzerland.MDPI, Basel.

[42] Li, Y., Wang, Y., & Zhang, Y. (2021)."The Role of Continuous Improvement in Innovation: A Study of the Mediating Role of Knowledge Sharing" *SCIRP*

[43] Madar, A. (2018). Implementation of total quality management Case study: British Airways. *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Brasov. Series V: Economic Sciences*, *8*(1).

[44] Marzooq, H., & Nisa, N (2022). The Impact of Employee Engagement on Employee Commitment and Firm Competitive Advantage: A Study of Manufacturing Firms in Ghana.

[45] Mbaisi, B. (2019), *Factors affecting strategic quality management practices in large manufacturing firms in Kenya, Retrieved from http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke* Unpublished MBA project, University of Nairobi .

[46] Mwangi, J., Ondabu, I., & Kinyanjui, G. (2021). Total Quality Management and Organizational Performance: A Study of Manufacturing Firms in Kenya. Journal of Business and Management, 9(1), 123-136.

[47] Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research: a guide to design and implementation.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

[48] Meyers, L. , Gamst, G., & Guarino, A. (2016). *Applied multivariate research: design and interpretation.* Sage publications.

[49] Mokhtar, E. S. (2019). Competition, corporate governance, ownership structure and risk reporting. *Managerial Auditing Journal*.

[50] Mugenda, O., & Mugenda, A. (2012). *Research Methods: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches.* Eldoret city : Acts Press.

[51] Mukherjee, D. (2019). Think phased implementation for successful data warehousing. *Inf. Syst. Manag.*, *20*(2), 82-90.

[52] Musonnafa, M. A., & Djazuli, A. (2022). The Effect of Customer Relationship Management on Marketing Performance Mediated by Competitive Advantage and Innovation (Study on Area Managers of Pharmaceutical Companies in East Java during the COVID-19 Pandemic). Asia Pacific Journal of Management and Education (APJME), 5(2), 111-121.

[53] Ngniatedema, T. (2019). Green operations and organizational performance. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, *5*(3).

[54] Ntwiga, P. N., Muchara, M., & Kiriri, P. (2021). The influence of employee empowerment on competitive advantage in hospitals within Nairobi, Kenya. The East African Health Research Journal, 5(1), 26.

[55] Nzioka, S. M. (2016). *Strategic quality management practices and performance of airlines. A case study of a Kenyan Airline* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Eldoret city).

[56] Oanda, V. T. (2018). *Challenges of strategy implementation in Private Security Companies in Kenya* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Eldoret city).

[57] Oakland, J. S. (2017). *Total quality management and operational excellence: text with cases*. Routledge.

[58] Pan, Y., Sheng, S., & Xie, F. T. (2021). Antecedents of customer loyalty: An empirical synthesis and reexamination. *Journal of retailing and consumer services*, *19*(1), 150-158.

[59] Park-Poaps, H., & Rees, K. (2019). Stakeholder forces of socially responsible supply chain management orientation. *Journal of business ethics*, *92*(2), 305-322.

[60] Parmar, B.L., Freeman, R. E., Jeffrey, H., Wicks, S., Andrew, C., Purnell, L. & de Colle, S. (2020). Stakeholder Theory: The State of the Art, *The Academy of Management Annals*, 4(1), 403-445.

[61] Petersen, K. J. (2019). How can supply management really improve performance? A knowledge-based model of alignment capabilities. *Journal of Supply Chain Management*, *51*(3), 3-17.

[62] Prottas, D. J. (2019). Relationships among organizational family support, job autonomy, perceived control, and employee well-being. *Journal of occupational health psychology*, *11*(1), 100.

[63] PourKiani, M., & Tanabandeh, M. (2016). Explaining the relationship between management commitment to service quality, job satisfaction, and organizational performance in the staff of Islamic Republic of Iran's Custom. *International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies (IJHCS) ISSN 2356*, *5926*, 101-115.

[64] Reuter, C., Goebel, P., & Foerstl, K. (2021). The impact of stakeholder orientation on sustainability and cost prevalence in supplier selection decisions. *Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management*, 18(4), 270-281.

[65] Rosca, E. (2018). Developing economies innovation enable sustainable development? A Systematic Literature Review. *The European Journal of Development Research*, *30*(1), 136-157.

[66] Rureri, W. (2018). *Effect of Strategic quality management practices on organizational performance of the steel manufacturing sector in Kenya* (Doctoral dissertation, JKUAT-COHRED).

[67] Sadikoglu, E., & Zehir, C. (2019). Investigating the effects of innovation and employee performance on the relationship between total quality management practices and firm performance: An empirical study of Turkish firms. *International journal of production economics*, *127*(1), 13-26.

[68] Samantha , F., Ken, K., & Scott, E. (2017). Sample size planning for more accurate statistical power: A method adjusting sample effect sizes for publication bias and uncertainty. *Association for Psycological Sciences*, 28(11), 1547–1562.

[69] Samat, N., Ramayah, T., & Saad, N. M. (2019). TQM practices, service quality, and market orientation: Some empirical evidence from a developing country. *Management research news*.

[70] Sarkis, J., Gonzalez-Torre, P., & Adenso-Diaz, B. (2020). Stakeholder pressure and the adoption of environmental practices: The mediating effect of training. *Journal of Operations Management*, 28(2), 163-176.

[71] Sekaran, U., & Bougie, R. (2010). *Research methods for business: A skill building approach* (5th ed.). West Sussex: John Wiley and sons Ltd.

[72] Simchi-Levi, D., Kaminsky, P. & Simchi-Levi, E. (2018). Designing and managing the supply chain: concepts, strategies and case studies. 3rd edition. New York: McGraw-Hill.

[73] Singh, P., J., Power, D., & Chuong, S., C. (2019). A resource dependence theory perspective of ISO 9000 in managing organizational environment. *Journal of Operations Management*, 29(1-2), 49-64.

[74] Tajeddini, K., Elg, U., & Trueman, M. (2018). Efficiency and effectiveness of small retailers: The role of customer and entrepreneurial orientation. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *20*(5), 453-462.

[75] Terziovski, M., & Guerrero, J. L. (2017). ISO 9000 quality system certification and its impact on product and process innovation performance. *International Journal of Production Economics*, *158*, 197-207.

[76] Thibault Prunet a,b,∗ , Nabil Absi a , Valeria Borodin a,c , Diego Cattaruzza d(2024). Optimization of human-aware logistics and manufacturing systems: A comprehensive review of modeling approaches and applications. *EURO Journal on Transportation and Logistics.* ScienceDirect

[77] Tobe, J., & Thomas, B. (2018). *Anticipate: Know what Your Customers Want Before They Do*. John Wiley and Sons.

[78] Uko, R. (2018). Quality management practices and performance of food and beverages firms in Port Harcourt. *International Journal of Advanced Academic Research, Social and Management Sciences*, *4*(1), 77-92.

[79] Upadhaya, B., Munir, R., & Blount, Y. (2014). Association between performance measurement systems and organizational effectiveness. *International journal of operations & production management*.

[80] Voss, C. A., Åhlström, P., & Blackmon, K. (2019). Benchmarking and operational performance: some empirical results. *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, 17 (10) 1046 - 1058

[81] Wang, Y., & Li, Y. (2020)"The Impact of Continuous Improvement on Employee Productivity: A Study of the Moderating Role of Job Complexity". Journal of Risk and Financial Management, 13, Article No. 55. https://doi.org/10.3390/jrfm13030055

[82] Yehuala, A. (2023). The effects of supplier relationship management practices on organizational performance and competitive advantage of large manufacturing companies in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia. *Journal of Future Sustainability*, 3(4), 233-242

[83] Yin, R. K. (2017). *Case study research and applications: design and methods.* Sage publications.

[84] Yoder, N. (2019). Preparing youth for the workforce of tomorrow: cultivating the social and emotional skills employers demand. SEL for workforce development. Collaborating states initiative. *Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning*.

[85] Yuen, F. & Thai, V. (2016). The relationship between strategic quality management practices and operational performances: a study of priorities and synergies, *Transportation Journal*, *55* (1), 31-50

[86] Yu, B., & Wu, C. (2021). How China's equipment manufacturing firms achieve successful independent innovation: The double helix mode of technological capability and technology management. *Chinese Management Studies*.

[87] Yusuf , Y., Gunasekaran, A., Adeleye, E. , & Sivayoganathan, K. (2004). Agile supply chain capabilities: Determinants of competitive objectives. *European Journal of Operations Research*, 159(2), 379-392.

[88] Zhu, Q., Sarkis, J., & Lai, K. H. (2018). Confirmation of a measurement model for green supply chain management practices implementation. *International journal of production economics*, *111*(2), 261-273.