



**THE COMBINED EFFECT OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP,
ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE, AND EMPLOYEE
ENGAGEMENT ON PUBLIC SERVICE ETHICS
COMPLIANCE IN KENYA'S COUNTY GOVERNMENTS**

M'Mugambi, David Kinyua

School of Management and Leadership Management University of Africa

Email of the Author: dkmugambi@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of Study: This research aimed to examine the combined effect of strategic leadership, organizational change, and employee engagement on public service ethics compliance in Kenya's County Governments.

Statement of Problem: Public service ethics compliance in Kenya's County Governments remains a pressing issue, with unethical behaviors such as corruption and lack of accountability undermining governance.

Methodology: The study utilized a cross-sectional survey design underpinned by positivist philosophy, analyzing quantitative data from 584 employees across eight Kenyan County Governments using inferential statistics.

Result: The findings showed that strategic leadership ($\beta=0.755$, $p=0.000$), organizational change ($\beta=0.760$, $p=0.000$), and employee engagement ($\beta=0.791$, $p=0.000$) significantly influenced public service ethics compliance. Their combined effect explained 70% of the variance, surpassing the individual contributions of 50.7%, 53.9%, and 56.7%, respectively.

Conclusion: The study concludes that strategic leadership, organizational change, and employee engagement collectively play a crucial role in enhancing public service ethics compliance in Kenya's County Governments.

Recommendation: The study recommends that County Governments strengthen strategic leadership practices, foster a culture of innovation and accountability.

Keywords: *Strategic leadership, organizational change, employee engagement, public service ethics, Kenya County Government.*

INTRODUCTION

The demand for ethical leadership has intensified globally, driven by scandals and organizational failures that have highlighted unethical practices in both the private and public sectors (Ahmed, Othman, & Shanmugan, 2016; Copeland, 2015). In the public sector, unethical behaviors such as corruption, patronage, and misuse of funds have undermined trust and professionalism (UNDP, 2015). Leadership, as defined by Bogenschneider (2016), involves influencing individuals or groups to achieve goals despite resistance, while Ganta and Manukonda (2014) emphasize its role in shaping values, beliefs, and behaviors. Strategic leadership, distinct from other forms of leadership, integrates ethical behavior, long-term vision, and systemic change, enabling leaders to inspire and guide organizations effectively (Hallinger & Suriyankietkaew, 2018; Van Der Maas, 2016). Copeland (2015) asserts that ethical leaders, as role models, influence subordinates to work with integrity, achieving positive outcomes.

Public service ethics involves norms and standards guiding governance, rooted in constitutional frameworks like Kenya's Article 10 (GOK, 2010) and the Public Service Commission's guidelines (PSC, 2015). Beyond legal compliance, it emphasizes integrity, accountability, and public trust (Menzel, 2012). Ethical leadership, grounded in principles of justice, honesty, and respect, reflects Aristotle's philosophies (Yukl et al., 2013). In Kenya, corruption underscores the need for systems thinking, combining robust institutions and personal integrity to combat unethical behavior (Yeboah, 2016). Theoretical perspectives, including authentic leadership, strategic leadership, transformational leadership, and social exchange theories, provide insights into addressing ethical challenges in public service.

Strategic leadership is a multifaceted concept encompassing processes, abilities, states, and practices, with a strong emphasis on strategic thinking. Clausen and Kragh (2018) describe it as a disciplined process to guide organizations toward achieving defined goals, while Jabbar and Hussein (2017) conceptualize it as a mechanism for propelling organizations into a desired future. It is also viewed as an ability to influence others to make decisions that enhance long-term organizational success (Schaubroeck & Malonson, 2013). Tochman, Campbell, and Hansin (2015) highlight strategic leadership as a state, focusing on the characteristics and actions of top leaders such as CEOs and senior managers who shape and implement the strategic direction of their organizations. Furthermore, Hartley, Alford, Hughes, and Yates (2013) emphasize the cognitive dimension of strategic

leadership, which involves collecting, interpreting, and evaluating information to create a sustainable competitive advantage.

As a practice, strategic leadership encompasses defining the organization's strategic direction, aligning resources, and mobilizing competencies to achieve set objectives (Hitt, Duane, & Hoskisson, 2017). Leaders must think critically, analyze diverse perspectives, and identify opportunities for growth while addressing challenges (Sarfraz, 2017). Strategic leadership also involves setting visions that resonate with organizational values, fostering stakeholder understanding and support, and implementing strategies effectively (Hijal-Moghrabi, 2018). Jabbar and Hussein (2017) operationalize strategic leadership using five dimensions: leader character, strategic visioning, strategy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. This framework highlights the integral role of leaders as direction-setters and agents of change who motivate employees to align with organizational goals. Importantly, strategic leadership enables organizations to navigate complex environments, anticipate risks, and ensure that short-term achievements align with long-term visions (Bratianu, 2015; Nanus, 1992). In this study, strategic leadership is hypothesized to influence public service ethics compliance in Kenyan County Governments.

Organizational change is conceptualized as a phenomenon, a management process, and an approach to improving the current state of an organization. Saleem and Naveed (2017) define it as an effort to transition organizations from an undesired state to a more favorable one. Similarly, Ryerson University (2018) frames it as a structured approach to moving individuals, teams, and organizations toward a desired future state. From a management perspective, Nickols (2016) views organizational change as the systematic transformation of processes to integrate new business models, enhancing relationships with stakeholders. In the public sector, this transformation is often termed public sector reforms, involving significant overhauls in structure, systems, and staffing to achieve operational efficiency (GOK, 2015).

Several models have been proposed to guide organizational change. Kotter's (1996) 8-step model emphasizes creating urgency, building coalitions, and institutionalizing new approaches, while McCalman, Paton, and Siebert (2016) advocate a four-layer model focusing on triggers, vision, conversion, and maintenance. The latter also recognizes the contextual nature of change, particularly the influence of organizational culture. The current study adopts Saleem and Naveed's (2017) operationalization of organizational

change, which encompasses innovation, redesigning structures and systems, and fostering cultural change. Public sector innovation, often driven by necessity, is pivotal in enhancing service delivery and addressing emerging challenges (Jordan & Battaglio, 2014). Additionally, adopting new systems and culture can overcome resistance and institutionalize desired changes, thereby fostering voluntary commitment to shared values and building trust (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015). This study hypothesizes that organizational change mediates the relationship between strategic leadership and public service ethics compliance.

Employee engagement has evolved into a multidimensional construct that captures the physical, cognitive, emotional, and mental investment employees bring to their work roles. Saks (2006) defined engagement as encompassing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components associated with individual role performance and distinguished job engagement from organizational engagement. Similarly, Albrecht, Bakker, Gruman, Macey, and Saks (2015) describe employee engagement as a positive state where individuals harness their personal attributes to align task performance with organizational objectives. Other scholars, such as Lolitha and Johnson (2015) and Anitha (2014), emphasize the emotional connection employees have with their organizations, reflecting their commitment to organizational values. Unlike related concepts such as organizational citizenship behavior or job satisfaction, employee engagement specifically highlights the two-way exchange of effort between employees and employers (Rusyandi, Sule, Joeliaty, & Muizu, 2016).

This study employs Saks' (2006) framework, identifying job characteristics, organizational and leader support, rewards, and justice as predictors of employee engagement, operationalized through work quality, organizational support, coworker relationships, and fairness in rewards and justice. Strong work environments and coworker relationships are vital for engagement, while rewards enhance commitment and accomplishment. Drawing on social exchange theory, justice emerges as a crucial moderator between strategic leadership and public service ethics compliance. Public service ethics, defined as the application of moral standards in governance, encompass responsibility, integrity, accountability, and knowledge of ethics. Ethical compliance fosters trust, accountability, and fairness, aligning public service conduct with societal expectations. By prioritizing ethics and fostering employee engagement, organizations enhance accountability and public trust while promoting fairness and professionalism in governance.

County Governments in Kenya, established in 2013 under the 2010 Constitution, are devolved units tasked with promoting national values and governance principles while contributing to Kenya's Vision 2030 goal of achieving global competitiveness and prosperity (Juma, Korir & Mulongo, 2014; GOK, 2007). Devolution encompasses administrative, fiscal, and political decentralization, empowering counties with decision-making, budget autonomy, and governance authority to improve public service delivery and compliance with ethical standards (Yusoff et al., 2016). While decentralization has shown mixed impacts globally—reducing corruption in Uganda (Balunywa et al., 2014) but initially hampering accountability in the Americas (Bojanic, 2018)—in Kenya, devolution has been critiqued for perpetuating ethnic patronage politics instead of addressing public service ethics compliance (D'Arcy & Cornell, 2016). This study investigates whether strategic leadership, introduced through public sector reforms, influences compliance with public service ethics within county governments. Data was collected from officials across all 47 counties, with a representative sample of eight counties selected to capture Kenya's ecological, cultural, and administrative diversity, reflecting employee opinions from various regions and levels of responsibility.

Statement of the Problem

The most pressing challenge facing Kenya is unethical behavior, primarily manifesting as corruption within the public service. This persistent issue raises concerns among researchers, leadership practitioners, and citizens alike, as unethical practices continue to escalate despite government-led legal-administrative reforms and various stakeholders' interventions. Mwenzwa and Misati (2014) cautioned that unethical conduct in county governments could undermine the success of devolution and jeopardize security and social cohesion. The current study focuses on addressing this challenge by examining the combined influence of strategic leadership, organizational change, and employee engagement on public service ethics compliance in county governments.

While studies by Khaunya, Wawire, and Chepng'eno (2015) and UNDP (2015) highlighted devolution's successes, evidence shows county governments struggle with ethics compliance (Minja, 2017; D'Arcy & Cornell, 2016). Reports from EACC (2018) and TI (2017) reveal persistent unethical practices despite capable leadership. Previous research often used limited samples, overlooking the combined effects of strategic leadership, organizational change, and employee engagement. This study addresses this

gap by examining their integrated impact on ethics compliance, offering evidence-based insights for policy and program development in Kenya's county governments.

Objectives of the Study

To determine whether the mediating effect of organizational change and moderating effect of employee engagement on the relationship between strategic leadership and public service ethics compliance is greater than their individual effects in the County Governments of Kenya.

Scope of the Study

This study examines the combined effect of strategic leadership, organizational change, and employee engagement on public service ethics compliance within Kenya's 47 county governments, established under the 2010 Constitution. Adopting a quantitative, cross-sectional design underpinned by positivist philosophy, the research uniquely integrates these three variables to assess their joint influence, offering a novel perspective on ethical compliance. The conceptual scope focuses on strategic leadership, organizational change, employee engagement, and public service ethics, while the contextual scope targets employees at various job levels across the devolved units. By employing a representative sample of counties, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of these factors' interplay in enhancing ethical compliance in Kenya's public service.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Literature Review

The study was anchored on Authentic Leadership (AL) Theory, defined by Walumbwa et al. (2008) as a leadership framework emphasizing self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced information processing, and relational transparency. This theory aligns closely with the study's focus on strategic leadership, organizational change, and employee engagement as drivers of public service ethics compliance. Authentic leadership fosters trust and positive development in leaders and followers by promoting ethical conduct and shared values, making it a suitable theoretical foundation for understanding how leadership can enhance ethical governance in Kenya's county governments.

AL Theory highlights the importance of leader character in ethical decision-making and interactions with followers. Authentic leaders, through integrity, purpose, and commitment to core values, inspire trust and encourage subordinates to embrace shared organizational

goals (Fusco, O’Riordan & Palmer, 2016). This is essential in addressing governance challenges such as corruption and unethical behavior in public service. Moreover, authentic leaders act as catalysts for organizational change, ensuring alignment between strategic goals and ethical standards, while creating an environment conducive to employee engagement and accountability.

Research supports AL Theory’s predictive capacity in fostering ethical behavior and employee engagement. Cianci et al. (2014) demonstrated that authentic leaders, by modeling high ethical standards, discourage unethical decision-making. Similarly, Wang, Lu, and Siu (2014) found that trust cultivated by authentic leadership partially mediated the relationship between leadership and employee engagement. These findings underscore the relevance of AL Theory in the study, providing a comprehensive framework for exploring how strategic leadership, organizational change, and employee engagement collectively influence public service ethics compliance.

Empirical Literature Review

The relationship between strategic leadership, organizational change, employee engagement, and public service ethics compliance has been extensively investigated, revealing significant insights into their interdependencies. Jabbar and Hussein (2017) provided foundational insights into the role of strategic leadership in the design and implementation of organizational strategies. They described strategic leaders as innovators, analysts, and ethical decision-makers, emphasizing their ability to set organizational direction and implement ethical practices. Their findings resonate with this study's focus on how strategic leadership influences public service ethics compliance in Kenya’s county governments. The study further highlighted that leaders who actively promote ethical principles are more likely to cultivate a culture of compliance, aligning with the objective of improving ethical standards in public service.

Elbanna, Andrews, and Pollanen (2016) found a strong positive correlation between formal strategic planning and successful strategy implementation in Canadian public service organizations, emphasizing the role of employee engagement and change management in this process. Their insights align with this study’s exploration of organizational change as a mediating factor and employee engagement as a moderating variable between strategic leadership and ethics compliance. Similarly, Forseth, Clegg, and Røyrvik (2019) demonstrated in Nordic public administration that ethical leadership fosters trust and

positive behavior among employees, even amidst resistance to organizational change. This highlights the critical role of leaders as ethical role models, reinforcing the importance of embedding ethical values within Kenya's county governments.

Studies in South Africa by Thonzhe and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2017) and in South Korea by Kim and Yun (2017) further support the link between strategic leadership and ethical compliance. Thonzhe and Vyas-Doorgapersad showed that effective ethics management strategies, including ethical leadership and supportive organizational cultures, enhance compliance and combat unethical behavior like corruption. Kim and Yun emphasized the pivotal role of strategic leadership in fostering accountability and ethical practices within organizational cultures. Additionally, Gaitho, Bolo, Ogutu, and Kitiabi (2019) revealed how well-structured organizational systems mediate the relationship between leadership and service delivery in Kenya's county governments. Together, these studies affirm the critical interplay between strategic leadership, organizational change, and employee engagement in fostering ethical compliance and achieving sustainable governance in devolved government systems.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the interaction of strategic leadership, organizational change, and employee engagement in influencing public service ethics compliance in Kenya's county governments. Strategic leadership drives ethics compliance, with organizational change mediating and employee engagement moderating the relationship. This framework emphasizes leadership's role and organizational dynamics in fostering ethical governance and reducing corruption.

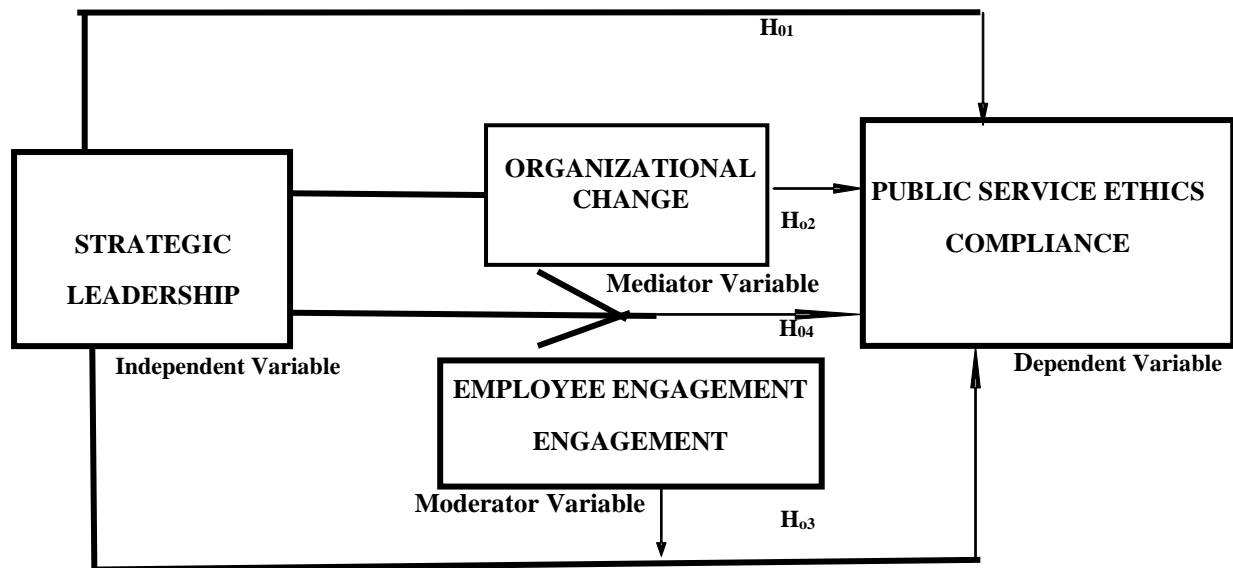


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework establishes a comprehensive approach to exploring the multi-faceted relationships among the variables. It sets the stage for the study's investigation into how strategic leadership and organizational factors collaboratively influence ethical practices in Kenya's county governments. Through this framework, the study seeks to contribute to the development of effective strategies to address unethical behavior and enhance governance standards.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a positivist philosophy and a cross-sectional survey design to investigate the relationship between strategic leadership and public service ethics compliance in Kenya's county governments. Data were collected from eight randomly selected counties, ensuring diverse regional representation and stratified sampling across employee levels. Structured questionnaires, validated through a pilot study in Embu County, measured dimensions of leadership, ethics compliance, organizational change, and employee engagement using Likert scales. Inferential analysis using SPSS examined how the integration of these variables collectively fosters ethical behavior in public service, providing valuable insights for improving compliance in Kenya's devolved government context.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Response Rate

The study achieved an 83% response rate, with 482 out of 584 questionnaires adequately completed, surpassing Sekaran and Bougie's (2016) recommended 75%. This high response rate was attributed to inclusive data collection methods and facilitative tools like the MUA university letter and NACOSTI research permit.

Table 1: Response Rate

Response	Response Distribution	Percentage
Administered Questionnaires	584	100%
Returned	482	82.53%
Un-returned	102	17.47%

Data for the study was collected from county government employees distributed in eight Counties across the eight administrative regions of Kenya. The result in Table 4.1 shows the overall response rate while Table 4.2 shows the response rate per County. The response in Nakuru in the rift valley was 70 employees; Bungoma in western region had 55, Nairobi region 81, Kilifi in Coast Region 54, Meru in Eastern Region 55, Nyeri in central 67 while Garissa in North Eastern had 35 and lastly Kisumu had 65. This shows that all regions in Kenya had a good representation and thus reduced bias of the findings.

Hypothesis Testing

The fourth objective of the study was to find out whether the combined effect of strategic leadership, mediating effect of organizational change and moderating effect of employee engagement on the public service ethics compliance is different from their individual effect. The fourth hypothesis stated in the null form is as follows:

H₀: *The mediating effect of organizational change and moderating effect of employee engagement on the relationship between strategic leadership and public service ethics compliance is not greater than their individual separate effects in the County*

Governments of Kenya

The individual regression coefficients for the independent variables strategic leadership, organizational change and employee engagement on the public service ethics compliance in the County Governments of Kenya were performed. The effects were analyzed in 4 models as guided by the following model:

$$P = \beta_0 + \beta_1 SL + e$$

The combined effect was assessed and results explained using coefficient of determination (R-Square), Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and the regression coefficients.

Table 2: R² for Strategic Leadership and Public Service Ethics Compliance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.712a	0.507	0.506	0.2144

The R-square results show that the first step for regressing strategic leadership and public service ethics compliance had an R-square of 50.7%. The model indicates that combined effect strategic leadership indicators (strategic visioning, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, strategy evaluation and leadership characteristics) explains 50.7% of the variation in Public Service Ethics Compliance. This implies that there exists a significant relationship between Strategic Leadership and public service ethics compliance in the County Governments of Kenya.

Table 3: ANOVA for Strategic Leadership and Public Service Ethics Compliance

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	22.718	1	22.718	494.2	.000b
Residual	22.065	480	0.046		
Total	44.783	481			

The ANOVA results in Table 3, F-Calculated (1, 481) = 494.2 which is greater than F-Critical (1, 481) = 3.96 at 95% confidence level. Results also show that p-value = 0.000 < 0.05. This further confirms that strategic leadership positively and significantly influences public service ethics compliance in the County Governments of Kenya.

Table 4: Regression Coefficients for Strategic Leadership and Public Service Ethics Compliance

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.985	0.136		7.238	0.000
Strategic Leadership	0.755	0.034	0.712	22.231	0.000

The regression of coefficients results shows that in step one, the regression model of strategic leadership and public service ethics compliance in the County Governments of

Kenya was significant with $\beta=0.755$, $p=0.000<0.05$) and supported by $T_{\text{Calculated}} = (1, 481) = 22.231 > T_{\text{Critical}} (0.05, 481) = 1.658$.

This can be summarized by the following model:

$$\text{PSEC} = 0.985 + 0.755\text{SL}$$

Where;

PSEC= Public Service Ethics Compliance

SL = Strategic leadership

The second step involved regressing organizational change and public service ethics compliance in the County Governments of Kenya. The second model was guided by the following equation:

$$\text{PSEC} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{OC} + e$$

This was assessed and explained using coefficient of determination (R-Square), Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and the regression coefficients.

Table 5: R² for Organizational Change and Public Service Ethics Compliance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.734a	0.539	0.538	0.2075

The Rsquared results shows that the third step for regressing Organizational Change against Public Service Ethics Compliance had an Rsquare of 53.9%. The model indicates that Organizational Change explains 53.9% of the variation in public service ethics compliance in the County Governments of Kenya. This implies that there exists a significant relationship between organizational change and public service ethics compliance in the County Governments of Kenya.

Table 6: ANOVA for Organizational Change and Public Service Ethics Compliance

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	24.12	1	24.12	560.29	.000b
Residual	20.663	480	0.043		
Total	44.783	481			

The ANOVA results indicate that $F_{\text{Calculated}}(1, 481) = 560.29$ which is greater than $F_{\text{Critical}}(1, 481) = 3.96$ at 95% confidence level. Results also show that $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$. This further confirms that organizational change significantly influences public service ethics compliance in the County Governments of Kenya.

Table 7: Regression Coefficients for Organizational Change and Public Service Ethics Compliance

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.973	0.128		7.582	0.000
Organizational Change	0.760	0.032	0.734	23.671	0.000

The regression of coefficients results shows that in step two, the regression model of organizational change and public service ethics compliance in the County Governments of Kenya was significant with $\beta = 0.760$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$) and supported by $T_{\text{Calculated}} = (1, 481) = 23.671 > T_{\text{Critical}}(0.05, 481) = 1.658$.

This can be summarized by the following model:

$$\text{PSEC} = 0.973 + 0.760\text{OC}$$

Where;

PSEC= Public Service Ethics Compliance

OC= Organizational Change

The third step involved regressing employee engagement and public service ethics compliance in the County Governments of Kenya. The third model was guided by the following equation:

$$\text{PSEC} = \beta_0 + \beta_1\text{EE} + e$$

This was assessed and explained using coefficient of determination (R-Square), Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and the regression coefficients.

Table 8: R² for Employee Engagement on Public Service Ethics Compliance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.753a	0.567	0.566	0.2011

The Rsquared results shows that the third step for regressing employee engagement against public service ethics compliance had an Rsquare of 56.7%. The model indicates that employee engagement explains 56.7% of the variation in public service ethics compliance. This implies that there exists a significant relationship between employee engagement and public service ethics compliance in the County Governments of Kenya.

Table 9: ANOVA for Employee Engagement on Public Service Ethics Compliance

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	25.378	1	25.378	627.74	.000b
Residual	19.405	480	0.04		
Total	44.783	481			

The ANOVA results indicates that $F_{\text{Calculated}} (1, 481) = 627.74$ which is greater than $F_{\text{Critical}} (1, 481) = 3.96$ at 95% confidence level. Results also show that $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$. This further confirms that employee engagement significantly influences public service ethics compliance in the County Governments of Kenya.

Table 10: Regression Coefficients for Employee Engagement and Public Service Ethics Compliance

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	0.846	0.126		6.695	0.000
Employee Engagement	0.791	0.032	0.753	25.055	0.000

In step three, the results show that the regression model of employee engagement and public service ethics compliance was significant with ($\beta=0.791, p=0.000$) and supported by $T_{\text{Calculated}} = (1, 481) = 25.055 > T_{\text{Critical}} (0.05, 481) = 1.658$.

The fitted model was:

$$PSEC = 0.846 + 0.791EE$$

Where;

PSEC= Public Service Ethics Compliance

EE = Employee Engagement

The fourth step involved regressing strategic leadership, organizational change, employee engagement and their interaction effects on public service ethics compliance. The fourth model for combined effect was guided by the following equation:

$$PSEC = \beta_0 + \beta_1 SL + \beta_2 OC + \beta_3 EE + \beta_4 SL * OC + \beta_5 SL * EE + \beta_6 + \beta_7 SL * OC * EE + e$$

This was assessed and explained using coefficient of determination (R-Square), Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and the regression coefficients

Table 11: R² for Strategic Leadership, Organizational Change, Employee Engagement and Interaction Effects on Public Service Ethics Compliance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.834a	0.700	0.691	0.1697

The R square results in show that the fourth step for regressing strategic leadership, organizational change, employee engagement and interaction effects on public service ethics compliance in the County Governments of Kenya had an R square of 70%. The model indicates that effect explains 70% of the variation in public service ethics compliance in the County Governments of Kenya. This implies that there exists a significant relationship between, organizational change, employee engagement and interaction effects on public service ethics compliance in the County Governments of Kenya.

Table 12: ANOVA for Strategic Leadership, Organizational Change, Employee Engagement and Interaction effects on Public Service Ethics Compliance

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	31.139	7	4.448	154.55	.000b
Residual	13.643	474	0.029		
Total	44.783	481			

ANOVA results show that the $F_{\text{Calculated}}(6, 481) = 154.55$ which is greater than $F_{\text{Critical}}(7, 481) = 3.96$ at 95% confidence level. Results also show that $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$. This further confirms that strategic leadership, organizational change, employee engagement and interaction effects significantly influences public service ethics compliance in the County Governments of Kenya.

Table 13: Regression Coefficients for Strategic Leadership, Organizational Change, Employee Engagement and Interaction Effects on Public Service Ethics Compliance

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.763	0.200		8.825	0.000
Strategic Leadership	0.029	0.005	0.027	2.567	0.005
Organizational Change	0.142	0.049	0.137	2.906	0.004
Employee Engagement	0.204	0.050	0.194	4.092	0.000
SL*OC	0.015	0.005	0.144	3.177	0.002
SL*EE	0.012	0.005	0.108	2.361	0.019
OC*EE	0.021	0.005	0.209	4.444	0.000
SL*OC*EE	0.003	0.001	0.121	2.595	0.010

In step four where the combined model was conducted, the results show that the joint model SL*OC*EE was positive and significant at ($\beta=0.003$, $p=0.010$) and supported by $T_{\text{Calculated}} = (1, 481) = 2.595 > T_{\text{Critical}} (0.05, 481) = 1.658$.

The fitted model was:

$$\text{PSEC} = 1.763 + 0.029\text{SL} + 0.142\text{OC} + 0.204\text{EE} + 0.015\text{SL*OC} + 0.012\text{SL*EE} + 0.021\text{OC*EE} + 0.003\text{SL*OC*EE}$$

The study revealed that strategic leadership ($\beta=0.755$, $p=0.000$), organizational change ($\beta=0.760$, $p=0.000$), and employee engagement ($\beta=0.791$, $p=0.000$) significantly influenced public service ethics compliance individually. In the combined model (SLOCEE), the effect was also significant ($\beta=0.003$, $p=0.010$), with an increased R^2 from 56% to 70%, indicating stronger explanatory power. This confirmed that the combined effect of the three variables on public service ethics compliance was significantly greater than their separate impacts, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that strategic leadership, organizational change, and employee engagement are key drivers of public service ethics compliance in Kenya's county governments. While each factor individually enhances compliance, their combined effect is more significant, underscoring the need for an integrated approach to foster ethical behavior, reduce corruption, and improve governance outcomes.

RECOMMENDATION

The study recommends that Kenya's county governments adopt an integrated approach combining strategic leadership, organizational change, and employee engagement to

enhance ethics compliance. This involves leadership development, innovative system practices, and fostering engagement through supportive environments and fair rewards. Aligning these strategies can strengthen public trust and ensure sustainable service delivery.

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