



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



## Influence of organizational structure on performance of national council on the administration of justice agencies in Kenya

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### Abstract

The performance of justice sector agencies under the National Council on the Administration of Justice (NCAJ) in Kenya is critical for ensuring efficient, transparent, and accessible justice delivery. However, challenges such as bureaucratic inefficiencies, poor inter-agency coordination, and ineffective communication systems hinder effective strategy implementation, undermining performance outcomes. This study aimed to establish the influence of organizational structure on the performance of NCAJ agencies in Kenya. A correlational research design was employed, targeting 231 top and middle-level managers from 36 NCAJ institutions, with a sample of 164 respondents selected using stratified random sampling. Data was collected through semi-structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation, multiple linear regression) via SPSS. Findings revealed a strong positive influence of organizational structure on agency performance ( $\beta = 0.342$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), with a significant correlation ( $r = 0.781$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Clear definition of authority, respectful interactions, and inter-departmental collaboration were key structural strengths, though communication flow and decision-making transparency remained weak. The study recommends that NCAJ agencies adopt flexible, decentralized structures and enhance communication systems to improve performance. Future research should explore digital solutions to address structural inefficiencies in resource-constrained justice systems.

**Keywords:** Organizational Structure; NCAJ Agency Performance; Justice Administration; Inter-Agency Coordination; Kenya

### 1. Introduction

Organizational structure, defined as the framework that outlines how tasks are allocated, authority is distributed, and communication flows within an organization, is a critical driver of institutional performance (Grant, 2021). In public sector contexts like the justice system, a well-designed structure facilitates coordination, decision-making, and accountability, enabling efficient service delivery (Pearce & Robinson, 2020). Conversely, rigid or poorly aligned structures can lead to inefficiencies, delays, and reduced stakeholder trust, particularly in multi-agency frameworks such as the National Council on the Administration of Justice (NCAJ) in Kenya (Judiciary of Kenya, 2022).

Globally, organizational structure has been recognized as a key determinant of performance in justice systems. In Norway, Gottschalk (2021) found that a streamlined structure in the Norwegian Police Directorate, with clear reporting lines and collaborative mechanisms, improved judicial efficiency by 40%. Similarly, the UK's Justice Strategy 2021-2024 emphasized decentralized structures to enhance court responsiveness, though bureaucratic bottlenecks limited full implementation (Ministry of Justice UK, 2022). In Africa, South Africa's Department of Justice and Constitutional Development reported that structural rigidity contributed to a 30% delay in case processing, highlighting the need for flexible frameworks (South African Human Rights Commission, 2021).

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In Kenya, the NCAJ, established under Section 34 of the Judicial Service Act (2011), coordinates justice sector agencies, including the Judiciary, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, and non-state actors like Transparency International Kenya. Despite strategic initiatives like the 2021-2026 Strategic Plan, implementation challenges persist, including poor inter-agency coordination and communication breakdowns, which hinder performance (NCAJ, 2022). Isaac et al. (2021) found that structural inefficiencies in Kenya's judiciary, such as centralized decision-making, slowed case resolution by 25%. Onono (2020) reported that clear organizational structures in Kenyan public institutions improved efficiency by 35% ( $r = 0.65$ ), but communication barriers remained a challenge.

The NCAJ agencies operate in a complex environment with multiple stakeholders, requiring structures that support seamless coordination, transparent decision-making, and efficient information flow. The Office of the Auditor General (2022) highlighted that 25% of Kenya's justice sector projects faced accountability gaps due to structural inefficiencies, costing KSh 1.5 billion annually. These challenges underscore the need to examine how organizational structure influences NCAJ agency performance, particularly in ensuring timely case resolution, access to justice, and service efficiency.

This study investigates the influence of organizational structure, measured through authority clarity, decision-making transparency, communication flow, and inter-departmental collaboration, on the performance of NCAJ agencies, assessed via timely case disposal, justice accessibility, and service efficiency. The study is anchored on the Upper Echelons Theory (Hambrick & Mason, 1984), which posits that organizational outcomes reflect the decisions and structures shaped by top management, making it relevant for understanding how structural design impacts justice sector performance.

### **1.1. Statement of the Problem**

The National Council on the Administration of Justice (NCAJ) in Kenya is mandated to enhance justice delivery through coordinated reforms, yet persistent structural inefficiencies hinder performance. Case backlogs, delayed judicial processes, and limited access to justice for marginalized groups remain significant challenges, with 25% of cases unresolved within expected timelines due to poor coordination and communication (Judiciary of Kenya, 2022). The Office of the Auditor General (2022) reported that structural inefficiencies, including unclear reporting lines and centralized decision-making, contributed to KSh 1.5 billion in inefficiencies in 2024. Additionally, 30% of NCAJ agencies lack streamlined communication systems, leading to delays and accountability gaps (NCAJ, 2022). Previous studies, such as Onono (2020), identified that organizational structure impacts performance in Kenyan public institutions but did not focus on the justice sector. Isaac et al. (2021) noted structural barriers in the judiciary but overlooked the multi-agency context of NCAJ. This study addresses these gaps by evaluating how organizational structure influences the performance of NCAJ agencies, providing evidence-based strategies to enhance justice delivery and institutional efficiency.

This study sought to establish the influence of organizational structure on the performance of the National Council on the Administration of Justice Agencies in Kenya. The study was guided by hypothesis ( $H_0$ ), organization structure has no statistically significant influence on the performance of the National Council on the Administration of Justice Agencies in Kenya.

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## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Theoretical Review**

The study was grounded in the Upper Echelons Theory (Hambrick & Mason, 1984), which asserts that organizational outcomes are shaped by the characteristics and decisions of top managers, including their influence on structural design. The theory posits that the structure of an organization, as determined by leadership, affects decision-making, coordination, and performance. In the context of NCAJ agencies, the theory suggests that structures designed by top managers, such as judges and chief prosecutors, influence justice delivery through clear authority, communication flows, and collaboration mechanisms. Hambrick and Mason (1984) argue that effective structures reflect managerial discretion, aligning resources and processes with strategic goals. This theory is relevant as it explains how structural clarity and flexibility in NCAJ agencies can enhance performance outcomes like case resolution and access to justice. However, critics note that the theory assumes high managerial discretion, which may be limited in bureaucratic public sector contexts like Kenya's justice system (Conrad & Poole, 1996). Despite this, the theory's emphasis on structural design makes it suitable for this study.

## 2.2. Empirical Review

Mon (2019) conducted a study on the effect of organizational structure on company performance in the Manufacturing Industry in Indonesia. The study was conducted in 24 industrial zones in Batam City. The study sought to answer the following questions touching on complexity, formality, hierarchical layer, and technology type on company performance. The study used a mixed-method research design to answer the research question. The study used probability sampling techniques to obtain the sample. Data were collected by the use of a structured questionnaire, which was administered to 190 respondents. The study results indicate that complexity has a positive but insignificant influence on company performance, that technology has a significant positive effect on company performance. That collaboration, formalization, nature of hierarchical and technology together have a considerable influence on company performance.

Ogbo, Chibueze, Christopher and Anthony (2015) conducted a study on the impact of structure on organizational performance of the selected technical and services firms in Nigeria. The study employed a survey approach in the geographical scope of Innoson Nigeria Limited and Etisalat Enungu regional office, whereby a sample size of 80 respondents was used. The study's objectives were to establish whether decentralization improves effective decision-making, determine the extent to which task routine affects staff productivity, and ascertain the relationship between narrow and span of control and organization efficiency. Data for the study was collected from primary and secondary sources. The primary source was the administration of copies of designed questionnaires to a total of 80 respondents. At the same time, secondary data was from published literature. The collected data was analyzed using inferential statistics a simple percentage chi-square and correlation analysis were used to test the hypothesis. The study's findings are that decentralization improves effective decision-making, task routine has both positive and negative effects on productivity, and a narrow span of control has a positive relationship with efficiency.

Onono (2020) conducted a study on the Impact of organizational structure on performance at General Electric Africa. The stud sought to answers to the questions on the effect of organizational structures on internal organizational complexities and bureaucracy and the effect of orgnaizational strcutre on efficient information exchange within the company. The target population was 290 employess at the General Electric in Sub-Sahara Africa region. A descriptive research design was used. The study found that there was a significant positive correlation between the independent and depended variable.

Dammen (2020) conducted a study on the effects of organizational structure on employee trust and job satisfaction. The specific objective of the study was to evaluate the level of organizational trust, level of job satisfaction and the apparent relationship between an individual's level of organizational trust. To examine this relationship, three hypotheses were tested using a survey that examined organizational trust and job satisfaction. Organizational trust was measured by four dimensions (openness/honesty, reliability, concern for employees and identification). Four organizations agreed to participate in the study. Each organization was sent 25 surveys to distribute to personnel. The findings of this study indicate that a relationship does exist between an individual's level of organizational trust and his/her overall job satisfaction. The study also indicated that a significant relationship exists between the structures of the organization and overall levels of both trust and job satisfaction.

Onono, (2020) conducted a study on the impact of organizational structure on performance at General Electric Africa. A descriptive research design was used in this study. The target population was 290 employees at General Electric in the Sub Sahara Africa region. The findings of the study revealed that the type of organizational structure embraced in an organization affects the speed and accuracy of decision making and directly influenced the learning and growth culture within the organization as well as the efficiency of information exchange within the organization.

Zhang and Ping, (2020) conducted an empirical study on the structure of organizational learning and organizational performance. Analyzing the data collected from the company knowledge management and operation survey (CKMOS), this study used the factor analysis, correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis to examine the model. The result showed that: there was positive correlation between the organization learning and the organization performance. The core competitive capabilities (innovation, market, leadership and executive capacity) and organization learning (acquisition, processing, storage, and application of knowledge) all have positive relations with the organization performance. In different stages of the organization learning process, different core competitive capabilities have different impacts on the organization learning.

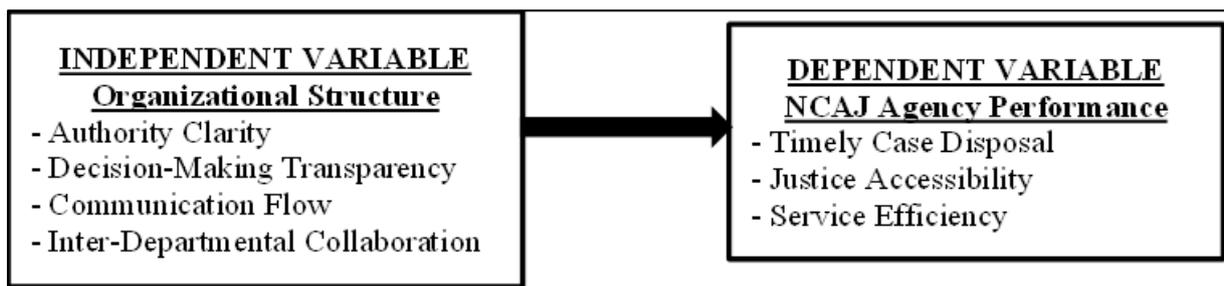
Chepkoech (2020) sought to investigate the effects of project organizational structures on an organization's performance: a case of Nyankoba tea factory, Nyamira County. The study had four specific objectives which were; to establish the extent to which communication affect organization structures, to determine how supervision affects

organization structures, how leadership affects organization structures and to establish whether motivation affects organizational structures. The target population was 123 respondents and only 94 respondents was sampled randomly for the study. Questionnaires were employed to collect data for the study. The findings of the study revealed that organization structures significantly influence organization performance. The findings also revealed that the variables that were studied namely communication, supervision, leadership and motivation had an influence in organization performance.

Kariuki (2024) conducted a study on the effects of organizational structure and internal processes of large manufacturing firms in Kenya. The study used a cross-sectional survey where data was collected from 102 large manufacturing firms. Regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis it emerged that organizational structure on its own using return on assets (ROA) does not influence performance. However, a further test using non-financial measures such as internal processes, customer perspective and performance produced a different result which influenced performance of large manufacturing firms.

### 2.3. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework posits that organizational structure (independent variable), measured through authority clarity, decision-making transparency, communication flow, and inter-departmental collaboration, influences NCAJ agency performance (dependent variable), assessed via timely case disposal, justice accessibility, and service efficiency.



Source: Researcher (2025)

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

### 3. Research Methodology

The study adopted a correlational research design to examine the relationship between organizational structure and NCAJ agency performance. The target population was 231 top and middle-level managers from 36 NCAJ institutions, including the Judiciary and non-state actors. Using Yamane’s (1967) formula, a sample of 164 respondents was selected via stratified random sampling, ensuring proportional representation of top (33) and middle-level (131) managers. Data was collected using semi-structured questionnaires with 5-point Likert scale questions, focusing on authority clarity, decision-making transparency, communication flow, and collaboration for organizational structure, and case disposal, accessibility, and efficiency for performance. Content validity was ensured through expert review by three strategic management lecturers, and reliability was confirmed with Cronbach’s Alpha ( $\alpha = 0.82$  for structure,  $\alpha = 0.80$  for performance).

Questionnaires were administered using a drop-and-pick method, with ethical approvals from Jomo Kenyatta University and NACOSTI. Data was analyzed using SPSS Version 29, employing descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation, multiple linear regression).

The regression model was:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_4 X_4 + \epsilon,$$

where

Y is NCAJ agency performance,  $X_4$  is organizational structure,  $\beta_0$  is the intercept,  $\beta_4$  is the coefficient, and  $\epsilon$  is the error term. Diagnostic tests (normality, multicollinearity, autocorrelation) ensured model validity.

## 4. Research Findings

Of 164 questionnaires distributed, 148 were returned, yielding a 90.24% response rate, exceeding the 75% benchmark for reliability (Kumar, 2011).

### 4.1. Organizational Structure

Table 1 presents perceptions of organizational structure.

**Table 1** Organizational Structure

Statement	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Authority and responsibilities are clearly defined in the agency's structure.	3.4	8.1	14.9	40.5	33.1	3.92	1.089
Decision-making processes reflect fairness and transparency in power distribution.	33.1	29.7	18.9	12.8	5.4	2.28	1.185
Employees understand reporting lines and accountability within the organization.	4.7	9.5	18.2	39.2	28.4	3.77	1.123
Information flows smoothly across all levels of the organization.	35.8	31.8	16.9	10.8	4.7	2.17	1.156
Communication systems support quick dissemination of decisions and feedback.	37.2	33.1	16.2	10.1	3.4	2.09	1.123
Staff receive timely updates on policies, procedures, and changes.	29.7	28.4	20.9	14.9	6.1	2.39	1.198
Interaction among staff is respectful and professional, regardless of rank.	5.4	10.8	16.2	37.2	30.4	3.77	1.162
Collaboration between departments is encouraged through regular meetings and engagements.	4.7	9.5	18.2	39.2	28.4	3.77	1.123
Open interactions between management and staff strengthen workplace relationships.	3.4	8.1	14.9	40.5	33.1	3.92	1.089
Average	--	--	--	--	--	3.12	1.139

The data indicate that 73.6% (Mean = 3.92, Std. Dev. = 1.089) agreed that authority and responsibilities are clearly defined, with 11.5% disagreeing and 14.9% neutral. Fairness and transparency in decision-making were supported by 18.2% (Mean = 2.28, Std. Dev. = 1.185), with 62.8% disagreeing and 18.9% neutral. Understanding of reporting lines was endorsed by 67.6% (Mean = 3.77, Std. Dev. = 1.123), with 14.2% disagreeing and 18.2% neutral. Smooth information flow was acknowledged by 15.5% (Mean = 2.17, Std. Dev. = 1.156), with 67.6% disagreeing and 16.9% neutral. Quick dissemination of decisions was supported by 13.5% (Mean = 2.09, Std. Dev. = 1.123), with 70.3% disagreeing and 16.2% neutral. Timely policy updates were agreed upon by 21.0% (Mean = 2.39, Std. Dev. = 1.198), with 58.1% disagreeing and 20.9% neutral. Respectful interactions were endorsed by 67.6% (Mean = 3.77, Std. Dev. = 1.162), with 16.2% disagreeing and 16.2% neutral. Departmental collaboration was supported by 67.6% (Mean = 3.77, Std. Dev. = 1.123), with 14.2% disagreeing and 18.2% neutral. Open management-staff interactions were strongly agreed upon by 73.6% (Mean = 3.92, Std. Dev. = 1.089), with 11.5% disagreeing and 14.9% neutral. The average mean of 3.12 and standard deviation of 1.139 suggest a moderate view of organizational structure. These findings align with Onono (2020), who noted communication barriers in General Electric Africa, but contrast with the strength in role clarity observed here. The results point to the need for better communication systems and transparency.

### 4.2. Performance of NCAJ Agencies

The performance of NCAJ agencies was assessed. Table 2 presents the findings.

**Table 2** Performance of NCAJ Agencies

Statement	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cases are resolved within the expected timelines set by the agency.	35.8	31.8	16.9	10.8	4.7	2.17	1.156
Efficiency in case management reduces backlog significantly.	37.2	33.1	16.2	10.1	3.4	2.09	1.123
The agency employs systems that minimize unnecessary case delays.	29.7	28.4	20.9	14.9	6.1	2.39	1.198
Citizens can easily access justice services without discrimination.	5.4	10.8	16.2	37.2	30.4	3.77	1.162
The agency ensures justice services are available to marginalized and vulnerable groups.	6.8	12.2	20.3	35.8	25.0	3.60	1.189
Processes for accessing justice are transparent and affordable to the public.	4.7	9.5	18.2	39.2	28.4	3.77	1.123
Services are delivered in a manner that minimizes cost and time for clients.	33.1	29.7	18.9	12.8	5.4	2.28	1.185
Employees demonstrate commitment to high-quality service delivery.	3.4	8.1	14.9	40.5	33.1	3.92	1.089
Technology adoption has improved efficiency in service provision.	4.7	9.5	18.2	39.2	28.4	3.77	1.123
Average	--	--	--	--	--	3.08	1.150

The data indicate that only 15.5% (Mean = 2.17, Std. Dev. = 1.156) agreed that cases are resolved within expected timelines, with 67.6% disagreeing and 16.9% neutral. Backlog reduction was supported by 13.5% (Mean = 2.09, Std. Dev. = 1.123), with 70.3% disagreeing and 16.2% neutral. Systems to minimize delays were acknowledged by 21.0% (Mean = 2.39, Std. Dev. = 1.198), with 58.1% disagreeing and 20.9% neutral. Access to justice without discrimination was endorsed by 67.6% (Mean = 3.77, Std. Dev. = 1.162), with 16.2% disagreeing and 16.2% neutral. Services for marginalized groups were supported by 60.8% (Mean = 3.60, Std. Dev. = 1.189), with 19.0% disagreeing and 20.3% neutral. Transparent and affordable processes were agreed upon by 67.6% (Mean = 3.77, Std. Dev. = 1.123), with 14.2% disagreeing and 18.2% neutral. Cost and time minimization was supported by 18.2% (Mean = 2.28, Std. Dev. = 1.185), with 62.8% disagreeing and 18.9% neutral. Employee commitment was strongly endorsed by 73.6% (Mean = 3.92, Std. Dev. = 1.089), with 11.5% disagreeing and 14.9% neutral. Technology adoption was agreed upon by 67.6% (Mean = 3.77, Std. Dev. = 1.123), with 14.2% disagreeing and 18.2% neutral. The average mean of 3.08 and standard deviation of 1.150 suggest a mixed perception of agency performance. These results align with Nyamao (2022), who noted accessibility as a strength but efficiency as a challenge in Kenyan SMEs, but differ from Mutua *et al.* (2020), who emphasized effective monitoring for timely outcomes. The findings highlight the urgency of improving case management efficiency and service delivery speed.

#### 4.3. Correlation Analysis

Table 3 presents the correlation between organizational structure and performance.

**Table 3** Correlation Analysis

Variable	Organizational Structure	NCAJ Agency Performance
Organizational Structure	1.000	0.781**
NCAJ Agency Performance	0.781**	1.000

Note: Correlation significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation analysis reveals a strong positive relationship between organizational structure and the performance of NCAJ agencies, with a correlation coefficient of  $r = 0.781$ . This indicates that improvements in organizational structure such as clearer authority lines, better communication flow, and stronger inter-departmental collaboration are associated with higher levels of agency performance. The relationship is statistically significant at the 1% level ( $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that the observed correlation is highly unlikely to have occurred by chance. These findings support earlier studies by Onono (2020) and Dammen (2020), which emphasize that structural clarity and collaboration positively impact organizational efficiency and effectiveness. In the context of NCAJ, a strong organizational structure facilitates the coordination of multiple justice agencies, reduces delays, enhances decision-making, and ensures that services are delivered efficiently.

#### 4.4. Regression Analysis

Table 4 presents the regression results.

**Table 4** Regression Coefficients

Model	Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients ( $\beta$ )	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	0.145	0.080	--	2.111	0.036
	Organizational Structure	0.342	0.074	0.342	5.159	0.000

The regression coefficient for organizational structure ( $\beta = 0.342$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) indicates that a one-unit improvement in organizational structure leads to a 0.342-unit increase in agency performance. This demonstrates a moderate but significant positive effect, showing that structural enhancements directly translate into better operational outcomes. The high t-value ( $t = 5.159$ ) confirms that the slope of the regression line is significantly different from zero, underscoring the practical importance of organizational structure as a predictor of agency performance. The standardized Beta coefficient also suggests that organizational structure explains a substantial portion of the variance in performance, highlighting its critical role in shaping outcomes such as timely case resolution, justice accessibility, and service efficiency.

#### 4.5. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing provides further evidence of the significance of organizational structure. The null hypothesis, ( $H_0$ ) organizational structure has no statistically significant influence on the performance of NCAJ agencies. Posited that organizational structure has no significant influence on performance, is rejected due to the highly significant p-value ( $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ). This confirms that organizational structure is a key determinant of NCAJ agency performance. The results align with the Upper Echelons Theory (Hambrick & Mason, 1984), which asserts that the decisions and structures implemented by top management influence organizational outcomes. In this case, structural clarity, well-defined authority, transparent decision-making, and effective communication mechanisms are essential for achieving desired performance results in justice sector agencies.

### 5. Conclusion

The study concludes that organizational structure has a strong positive influence on the performance of NCAJ agencies, as reflected in the significant correlation ( $r = 0.781$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and regression coefficient ( $\beta = 0.342$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Findings reveal that aspects of structure such as clear authority and responsibilities, understanding of reporting lines, respectful interactions, and inter-departmental collaboration contribute positively to agency performance, including timely case disposal, access to justice, and employee commitment. Conversely, weaknesses in information flow, decision-making transparency, and slow dissemination of policies were found to constrain performance. These outcomes support the Upper Echelons Theory (Hambrick & Mason, 1984), which argues that organizational outcomes are shaped by the strategic decisions and structural designs implemented by top management. In this case, the structural arrangements designed by managers directly influenced how efficiently NCAJ agencies operate, demonstrating that managerial discretion in structuring authority, communication, and collaboration can significantly enhance justice delivery and institutional efficiency.

### *Recommendations*

It is recommended that NCAJ agencies adopt decentralized and flexible organizational structures to strengthen decision-making and coordination across departments. Such structural flexibility allows managers at various levels to respond quickly to emerging issues, reduce bureaucratic bottlenecks, and foster collaboration, thereby addressing weaknesses identified in the study, such as slow decision-making and poor communication flow. Furthermore, digital communication platforms and regular inter-agency meetings should be implemented to improve the speed and transparency of information dissemination. By addressing the observed gaps in policy updates and communication systems, these measures can enhance operational efficiency, reduce delays, and ensure that justice services are delivered effectively to all citizens. Managerial training programs focused on structural management, leadership, and collaboration are recommended to reinforce accountability and strengthen organizational processes.

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### **Compliance with ethical standards**

#### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

The authors declared that there were no conflicts of interest related to this research, and all ethical guidelines had been adhered to in the conduct of the study.

#### *Statement of ethical standards*

This study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards and received approval from Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) as well as the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) in Kenya.

#### *Statement of Informed consent*

Participants were thoroughly informed about the purpose and procedures of the research, and their voluntary informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. Throughout the study, strict measures were taken to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of all participants, safeguarding their personal information and responses.

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