

**STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION AT THE EXPORT PROCESSING ZONES  
AUTHORITY, KENYA.**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has never been presented to any other University/College for the award of a degree.

Signed ..... 

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This research project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the university supervisor.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicated this research to my mother Fatuma Adan Edow, my wife, Hafsa Mohamed, and my daughters. Rayyan, Ridhwan, and Rufeydah for their selfless support and belief in my potential and for encouraging me, thanks for your prayers. To my mother who always sacrificed, supported, and inculcated relentless virtues in me. It was always your desire for me to be fruitful mentally and in all depths of life. To my supervisor, lecturers, and fellow students for their undying support throughout my studies.

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## **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>AGOA:</b>	Africa Growth and Opportunity Act.
<b>CEO:</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>EPZ:</b>	Export Process Zones
<b>EPZA:</b>	Export Processing Zones Authority
<b>KEBS:</b>	Kenya Bureau of Standards
<b>KII:</b>	Key informant Interviewees
<b>KRA:</b>	Kenya Revenue Authority
<b>M&amp;E:</b>	Monitoring & Evaluation
<b>NGO:</b>	Non-Governmental Organizations
<b>SI:</b>	Strategy Implementation
<b>SP:</b>	Strategic Plan
<b>US:</b>	United State
<b>U.S.A:</b>	United States of America
<b>UNCTAD:</b>	United Nations Conference for Trade and Development

## **ABSTRACT**

Strategy implementation is relevant to the realization of the organization's mission and vision. Strategy implementation can ensure that the Export Processing Zones Authority identifies the strategy implementation practices as well as the challenges and then attempts to mitigate the challenges to enable the Authority to achieve the objectives for which it was established efficiently and effectively. Several studies have been conducted to establish strategy implementation, practices, challenges, and mitigation measures for overcoming such challenges. However, such studies have conflicting findings. They also utilized methodologies with their limitations. Additionally, they did not look at strategy implementation at the Export Processing Zone Authority in Kenya together with variables such as strategy implementation practices, challenges of strategy implementation, and measures of mitigating such challenges collectively hence the need for the current study. This study therefore sought; to establish the strategy implementation practices at EPZA Kenya, to determine the challenges of strategy implementation at EPZA Kenya, and to ascertain the measures taken to mitigate the strategy implementation challenges at EPZA Kenya. The study employed a case study design and utilized interviews to collect primary data. Secondary data was obtained through published materials. The research participants were departmental heads at the Export Processing Zone Authority. Data was then analyzed through thematic content analysis. The study established that culture influences strategy implementation. The study also established that inadequate resources are a challenge to strategy implementation. Additionally, the study established that adequate resources and staff can help mitigate the challenges of strategy implementation. The study concluded that for EPZA to implement strategy effectively and efficiently, relevant strategy implementation practices must be implemented, challenges must also be identified and measures for addressing such challenges must be taken.



# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of the Study

Organizations are under escalating pressure to adopt suitable strategies that make them relevant in the competitive global market environment. Strategy implementation refers to the actions, processes, and activities a firm undertakes to attain its strategic objectives (Alharthy *et al* 2017). It is a high niche for businesses to achieve their goals and success due to its ability to improve firm growth and performance. The greatest challenge in SI is the execution of the strategy as developed and required. The challenges often include a lack of clear and common understanding of the broader scope, and objectives goals as well as a lack of strategic consensus and clarity of the objective's goals, (Noble 1999). Scholars such as Akhtar *et al* (2011), seem to agree on strategy implementation factors in organizations.

The institutional theory served as the study's foundation. John Meyer and Brian Rowan first proposed the institutional theory in the 1970s. According to the theory, organizations are similar because they employ similar practices and strategies that are framed by three isomorphic templates, including mimetic isomorphism, which states that organizations imitate the best practices of the high-performing organizations in their industry. The institutional theory will be complemented by McKinsey's 7s Framework. The McKinsey 7s model, developed by Anthony G. Athos, Julien Philips, Robert Waterman, and Tom Peters while they were working for the consulting company McKinsey, offers a more comprehensive explanation of successful strategy execution. This model consists of seven independent elements that can only be divided into hard products and soft products. Complex topics include business models, concepts, systems, etc. takes place; selling points include leadership, integration, management, human resources, and capabilities, etc. takes place. According to Ravan Far (2015), they are strategically significant due to the creation of the organizational structure, innovation, and significant contribution to granting the firm a competitive edge.

The aim of the Export Processing Zones Authority (EPZA) is to promote and improve all aspects of EPZs, with particular emphasis on providing advice, removing barriers and creating incentives for the production of products developed in EPZs. Regulation

and administration of approved activities within the EPZs; Protection of state revenues and foreign currency revenues. To realize the Authority's key mandate, EPZA Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023 was developed and a validation workshop was set up that brought together key relevant stakeholders in the EPZ program (among them EPZ enterprises, Government Ministries, and departments such as Immigration, Kenya Ports Authority, KEBS, Kenya Leather Development Council, and KRA, to ensure that the aspirations of all players were incorporated (UNCTAD, 2019). EPZA takes advantage of the trade pact signed by the U.S. president in 2000 (AGOA) to aid African exports that include crude oil and petroleum products, which accounts for about 48% of all Africa to U.S.A exports under AGOA and others such as tea, cocoa beans, mangoes, raw tobacco and coffee beans, processed foods, motor vehicles, home décor, and fashion products. Kenya thus exports mainly raw agricultural products, while importing refined high-value manufactured products such as cars, electronics, and textile products among others. (Export Development and Promotion Strategy, 2018). EPZA, therefore, has a mandate to; implement and facilitate policies on trade, such as the AGOA implementation, attract investments from potential investors promote new markets, especially in the east, and market value-added Agri-food exports to potential consumers all over the world. The study thus sought to analyze the process of strategic implementation of the strategic plan and the challenges possibly faced thus far to ascertain the level of strategy implementation by EPZA based on its mandate.

### **1.1.1 Concept of Strategy Implementation**

According to Jooste and Fourie (2009), strategy implementation is about the translation of an organization's game plan into actionable elements to realize predetermined goals. In other words, strategy implementation is nothing other than actioning the organization's plans with the idea of meeting the objectives for which the organization is established. According to Sorooshian *et al* (2010), strategy implementation is the operationalization of the organization's strategic plan by designating roles to key organization employees with the goal of the organization in mind. According to Chetty (2020), strategy implementation is actioning the organization's plans through a process that is well thought out and with employees that are carefully selected to realize the reason for which the enterprise is established. As such, strategy implementation is the

only way through which the organization achieves its objectives, both long-term and short-term objectives (Chetty 2020).

According to Kohtamaki et al. (2012), strategy implementation practices involve strategic plan development. Strategic plan development is the process of putting down the most relevant plans for the organization that the organization's top management can consider for purposes of implementation. Additionally, Elsie Mbua Eposi<sup>1</sup> & Marius Potgieter<sup>1</sup> (2021), argue that financial resources or budget allocation are also central to strategy implementation. As a practice, allocating adequate finances for purposes is like the fuel that propels strategy execution since employees who are to implement strategy require payment. Furthermore, according to Mbugua and Gachua (2016), transformative leadership is another of the practices that underpin strategy implementation. Organizational leaders must exercise transformative leadership such as individual consideration and motivation of the organization's workforce to ensure that strategy implementation execution goes on smoothly. According to Ng'ang'a and Ombui (2013), identifying and implementing a structure that is relevant to the organization is also relevant to strategy implementation. For example, a smaller organization may require a flat structure while bigger organizations may require more matrix management.

According to Norton and Kaplan (2013), strategy implementation is not necessarily successful upon implementation. As such a strategy implementation may fail given that all the elements that contribute to strategy implementation success are not necessarily within the control of the organization implementing the strategy. In concurrence, Wessel (2011), points out that factors such as technological changes as well as politics are factors outside the organization and which can all undermine the efforts of strategy execution in any organization. However, according to Alharthy (2017), strategy implementation is always successful if all procedures are carried out efficiently. Though there are challenges to strategy implementation, there are adequate contingency plans within the strategic plan that should still enhance the implementation. Trafford and Boggis (2014), agree that a strategic plan has mechanisms of review and changing direction should there be any challenges in the implementation process. As such strategy implementation should be successful upon operationalization.

### **1.1.2 The Export Processing Zones Authority**

According to EPZA's strategic plan for 2019-2023, the EPZA was operationalized in 1990 through the EPZ Act (CAP 517), The mandate of the Authority was to encourage export investment and develop and enhance an enabling environment for such investments and by extension, creation of jobs and contributing to the national budget. The role of EPZA since its establishment in contributing to the betterment of the country cannot be underestimated but at the same time, the Authority has had its hits and misses. For instance, in 2014-2019, the EPZ program contributed only 18.56% of employment despite its huge capacity to create jobs within the country. However, in 2018, exports reached Kshs. 72 billion which is good money, but a lot more can still be done. In 2019, the internally generated revenue reached 83.4% of the recurrent budget compared to 79.3% in 2014.

The failure to realize its full potential in line with its strategic plans which include employment, export, contribution to the national budget, as well as improving the manufacturing sector can be attributed to several factors, such factors include political instability after every election cycle as well as low economic growth in the country. Other reasons include social factors such as tradition and lifestyles that do not align with the strategic plan of the Authority. Further, technological advancement continues to disrupt the way of doing production and business as well as environmental factors including climate change, other challenges include delay in AGOA renewal, and the threat of protectionism in international trade and regional competition, together with the legal environment including regulations. Despite such challenges, proper strategy implementation can place the EPZA/ EPZ program on the right trajectory of growth. (EPZA Strategic Plan 2019-2023).

### **1.2. Research Problem**

The debate about strategy implementation is not conclusive. According to Atkinson (2006), the narrow conceptualization of the automatic success of strategy implementation undermines the different contexts under which strategy implementation occurs. Further, Thompson and Strickland (2013), point out that the inconsistent generalization about strategy implementation in literature reaffirms the need for further research, not just to set the record straight, but also to add to the body

of knowledge about strategy implementation in diverse contexts. In addition, Further, Miller (2002), argues that the impossibility of addressing all the concepts of strategy implementation at once makes further studies necessary.

The Export Processing Zone Authority (EPZA) has not been able to meet its strategic priorities. For instance, employment has been a key objective in its strategic plan. Yet, the figures available indicate that it only managed 18.56% as of 2019 while its contribution to the national budget is not consistent. Although the role of the EPZ program in economic development cannot be underestimated, the program has been plagued by a lot of challenges such as political, economic, social, environmental, technological, and regulatory challenges. Still. Proper implementation of strategy can help the EPZA to improve its performance and excel at what it was established to do.

A study conducted by Alexander (1985), sought to establish barriers to strategy implementation using a quantitative approach. The study established that the external business environment negatively influences strategy implementation. Although the study is credible, it utilized a quantitative approach which undermines in-depth insight into the phenomenon. Studies conducted by Taslak (2004), and Kohtamaki et al. (2012), aimed to establish factors affecting strategy implementation. The findings of their studies were similar having established that strategic planning, employee commitment, and change management all contributed to strategic implementation. Although the findings are valid, they left out other key concepts of strategic implementation such as strategic plan development, structure, culture, leadership, and resources. Other researchers have conducted robust studies on strategy implementation such as Alharthy et al (2017), who conducted a study in the construction industry. All the findings of the studies had one line of commonality namely, that strategy implementation is influenced by the availability of resources. Although such studies are credible, they were done in different contexts. For instance, studies done in developed economies may not have valid implications in developing countries like Kenya.

Although the studies reviewed are credible, they had inconsistent findings. The studies also utilized methodologies with their own sets of limitations. For instance, the studies used quantitative studies yet quantitative studies focus a lot on statistics and may fail to get into the in-depth of the phenomenon being investigated. Furthermore, some of the

studies were conducted in developed countries which is a different context compared to developing countries like Kenya. Yet, developing countries have different ways of doing things and advanced technology so much so that the findings may not have valid implications everywhere. The current study seeks to fill the gaps by answering the question: What is the nature of strategy implementation at the Export Processing Zones Authority in Kenya?

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

The objectives of the study were:

- i. To establish the strategy implementation practices at EPZA Kenya
- ii. To determine the challenges of strategy implementation at EPZA Kenya.
- iii. To ascertain the measures taken to mitigate the strategy implementation challenges at EPZA Kenya.

### **1.4 Value of the Study**

The value of this study was multifaceted. First, the researcher hoped that through carrying out the study, top managers at EPZA would find this study a useful tool that can help address challenges facing strategy implementation processes in their mandate. The study recommended actions to improve the quality of SI to the Authority. The recommendations from the study if adopted could contribute to effective and efficient strategy implementation in similar organizations.

In carrying out the study, the researcher aimed towards enhancing EPZA- Kenya's capacity to overcome challenges of strategy implementation and promote firm performance through the attainment of goals. The study was thus hoped will help align the organizational goals to strategy implementation strategic plan as developed. The study could also be critical in establishing the action-focused areas and obstacles hindering the effective implementation of strategy at EPZA. It is also anticipated that the study could be of high significance to scholars and researchers in the area of strategic management as it will contribute to the body of knowledge on strategy implementation. The study could be important to academia as it suggested an area of further research.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter examined and presented theoretical and empirical literature relating to strategy implementation by critically examining scholarly works of other researchers conducted on strategy implementation. The theories chosen were thus relevant and justifiably significant to strategy implementation while the literature reviewed was relevant and recent. It laid focus on the theoretical foundation of strategy implementation, the SI process, and factors affecting SI.

### **2.2 Theoretical Foundation**

This study is based on the institutional theory defined by North (1991) and enhanced by McKinsey's 7s framework. While institutional theory focuses on deeper, more complex social structures, McKinsey's framework identifies seven elements: systems, shared values, staff, structure, strategy, skills, and style that are important for bringing the idea to life (Kaplan 2005).

#### **2.2.1 Institutional Theory**

This theory was propounded by (John Meyer & Brian Rowan 1977). The theory asserts that the institutional level of organization and formal structure development is highly determined as well by the institutional environment. Thus, the environment of an institution can strongly influences the development of the structures in an institution by adopting policy norms, cultures, and rules which are then entrenched as social behavior's authoritative guidelines (Vasudeva, Nachum & Say 2018). The theory illustrates that applying proven new practices leads to better implementation of organizational policies and projects (Zhao, Fisher, Lounsbury & Miller 2017).

The theory describes the procedures by which organizational structures, rules, routines, plans, and standards are carried out and firmly established as social behavior guidelines in an organization Cornelissen, et al, (2015). Institutional theory's different components describe the processes that are created, diffused, adapted, and adopted spatially and temporally and how they depreciate and fall into misuse over time. The institutional

theory advocates for three concepts that involve coercive isomorphism, derived from political appropriation and legitimacy prospects. It perpetuates the rule of law and advocates the enforcement mechanisms by strict compliance and implementation of the policies and procedures in an organization. It thus promotes the strengthening of the existing institutional structures for the proper functioning of an organization

This theory, however, is based on the assumptions that the implementation of policies, procedures, norms, goals, and deliverables in an organization is smooth and everything easily falls in place as planned. The theory thus does not recognize implementation shortfalls and challenges that organizations must grapple with. However, the theory is important as it illuminates the transformational path that an institution undertakes to recreate dynamism, relevance, competitiveness, and public confidence in it. Institutional processes and goals are thus shaped by their culture, processes, and decision-makers and by their openness to actors performing different roles in affecting the organization.

### **2.2.2 The McKinsey 7-S Model Framework**

Peters and Waterman (1982) developed the 7s framework to help managers solve problems in the change process. The framework is based on seven things that must be followed to be successful in a company. The framework states that achieving these key elements can determine organizational success. They classify these as hard elements (systems, strategy, and structures) that are easy to define and manage; whereas soft elements are at the heart of the organization as they relate to the organization's competitive advantage, but are generally more difficult to control (style, staff, skills and shared values). The basic principles are stated in the following points: supporting change in organizations, using new ideas, finding out how each element of change can create an impact in the future, and facilitating mergers and acquisitions of organizations (Mallya 2007). Therefore, a model is taken that explains how these elements relate to each other. The main idea of the model is to combine seven variables to get a good result.



### **2.3 Strategy Implementation Practices**

Kurendi (2013), investigated the variables affecting SI in Kenya's Naivasha flower fields. Research shows that factors such as top management commitment, clear responsibilities, existing laws, financial allocations, and internal control procedures all influence SI. Onyango (2012), investigated SI elements influencing the Kenyan sugar industry's execution of strategy, the study established organizational structure, communication, resources, leadership, and management are some of the factors that influence SI. In the example of Maasai Mara National Park, Muturi & Abuga (2016), investigated factors influencing strategy implementation in the tourism sector, The research established that the provision of leadership direction is among the factors that influence SI in the tourist sector. Mumenya, Mokaya, and Kihara (2014), researched the function of leadership in the manufacturing sector of Nakuru County's Bidco Oil Refineries, and Olweny (2016), investigated strategy implementation at Jaramogi Oginga Odinga teaching and referral Hospital, the study established that communication, work plan development, budget, and performance appraisal are some of SI practices at the hospital. The research's conclusions cannot be applied to EPZA generally. By analyzing the strategy implementation process at the Export Processing Zone Authority in Kenya, this study will try to address the vacuum in the literature that has been identified.

Elsie Mbua Eposi<sup>1</sup> & Marius Potgieter<sup>1</sup> (2021), carried out a qualitative study of Office, using semi-structured interviews to gather data. The results showed that the post office struggled to implement strategy due to challenges such as financial resources, management, communication, vision, issues with organizational leadership, commitment, and a lack of proper implementation plans. Although the study is plausible, it had a different motivation focus. The study focused on strategy implementation obstacles and thereby left out strategy implementation practices.

Mbugua and Gachua (2016), carried out an empirical study to evaluate the elements impacting strategy execution in private universities in Kenya's Kiambu County, and they found that transformative leadership was a crucial component. The study only focused on private universities which are all learning institutions. However, learning

institutions are in different contexts from the Export Processing Zones Authority. As such the difference in context makes the findings difficult to generalize in all contexts.

In addition, Ng'ang'a and Ombui (2013), investigated the variables impacting strategy implementation in Kenyan secondary schools. The sampling method used for the investigation was simple random sampling. Additionally, the study had a survey design, and qualitative methods were applied for data analysis. The results of the study showed that secondary schools' strategy execution was influenced by structures. Although the study is trustworthy, it was done in secondary schools and not EPZA raising the issue of context and hence the findings may not have valid implications in all contexts.

#### **2.4 Challenges of Strategy Implementation**

Numerous studies have been conducted on SI to determine factors and key determinants of the execution of strategic plans by different organizations. Thompson (2017), posits that a robust strategy promotes innovations and efficiency in successful task implementation. Successful implementation happens when robust strategic units are developed. Planning for execution becomes critical as propounded by Pearce and Robinson (2004), who propose that before execution, stakeholders are to take part in the formulation and initiation process. The process of involvement should be consultative so that the outcome can be strategically implemented to achieve the desired outcome. Therefore, the stakeholders involved should have a wide knowledge of the different categories of production and processing units of the firms for success in execution. The planning stage should be carefully done to give a springboard for the onward implementation of the strategy. This should include how resources are allocated, the allocation of specific responsibilities, and how the arising challenges will be mitigated.

Elsie Mbua Eposi<sup>1</sup> & Marius Potgieter<sup>1</sup> (2021), carried out a qualitative study to identify the challenges associated with implementing a strategy in the South Africa Post Office, using semi-structured interviews to gather data. The results showed that the post office struggled to implement strategy due to the following challenges financial resources, poor management, lack of proper communication, lack of vision, issues with organizational leadership and commitment, technology, and lack of a proper implementation plan. Olweny (2016), investigated strategy implementation at Jaramogi

Oginga Odinga Teaching and Referral Hospital, the study established that lack of adequate financial resources, complex organizational structure, and poor culture are among the SI challenges at the hospital. Although the studies are plausible, the difference in context makes the findings difficult to generalize in all contexts including EPZA.

It is recommended that the planning stage of the strategy implementation should have the right technical expertise and experience for the activities that are involved. The resources required should be optimally allocated with special regard to critical activities that support the subsidiary activities. Thus, time and resources should also allow employees to be innovative to try different methods in the implementation of the required strategy. Conversely, the study ignored crucial elements like organizational structure.

Strategy implementation thus requires room for progressive adjustments and this puts a competent management team at the core of monitoring the process during the implementation process to intervene and take appropriate action should monitoring reports indicate that the strategy is failing. Resources that are critical in SI include technologies, financial resources, human resources, and infrastructural resources (Elsie Mbua Eposil & Marius Potgieter 2021). Resources are an integral factor of SI because it determines task performance according to specific needs. Management should be aware of potential bottlenecks to appropriate resource allocation and appropriation in organizations engaged in the implementation of strategies, such as the emphasis on short-term financial outcomes, resource protection, and the development of a strategy that is ineffective in advancing an organization's missions and objectives.

When an organization promotes a sharing culture, knowledge transfer across the organization plays a critical role in SI as change is inevitable. Therefore, the culture should be encouraging, forward-thinking, and aligned with the organization's strategy, mission, and goals (Johnson & Scholes, 2008). Through corporate cultures, employees learn the sensibility and behavior necessary to manage their affairs, those of the company, and responsibilities that are in line with the organization's current plan. Since managers are responsible for helping to implement strategies, it is part of their job to

make sure the organization's culture supports the strategy and that it is used in all activities.

## **2.5 Measures to Mitigate Strategy Implementation Challenges**

Bennis (2009), contends that effective leadership is integral in the SI in an organization as their actions either promote or hinder its execution. For instance, effective leadership is measured by the institutionalization of the change process during the SI. The leader should have a high acceptability level within the organization as without effective leadership, there can never be successful change execution of the SI plan within the organization. The leadership styles have been established to have a direct positive with the implementation of organizational goals and strategies.

Aboramadan et al (2016), studied the role of SI practices in determining the performance of NGOs. A correlational survey was applied to evaluate NGO operations in Palestine. The results indicate that NGOs with better strategic management practices delivered their activities and services more effectively and successfully while consequently the performance of the NGOs without comprehensive strategic plans and implementation roadmaps was found to be very poor. Kariithi and Ragui (2018), undertook descriptive research to determine SI practices on the performance of Huduma Centres, Kenya. Elsewhere in Iran; Changiz (2011), studies SI in the SME sector. Their findings provide a relationship that is positive with the leadership and subsequently performance of the Centers. Unfortunately, the study was focused on an approach that differs from the current study as they only assessed leadership as a factor influencing SI while the current study will evaluate more factors that go beyond just leadership in organizations alone.

Waithaka and Nkatha (2018), studied how employee training in Embu County as an activity for SI influences their performance. According to the findings, Training employees as an SI activity enhances the county's performance. The study conversely failed to holistically evaluate the SI execution but only focused on employee training.

Obiero (2018), examined the SI influence on the performance of the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) the findings indicate that the allocation of resources, effective communication, and management support to employees had a significant influence on

the performance of the organization. The study however focused on KRA's performance and the general execution of their strategic plans to achieve their organizational goals. The current study thus will try to fill the lacuna by looking at all the overall factors influencing SI. Kiiyuru (2014), studied SI in the banking sector in Kenya using a survey research design and reported that the availability of resources, frequent communication, and top management support to employees led to change and strategy adoption and this led to improved performance of the banks. The strategy that focused on technological innovations and overhauls within the commercial banks in Kenya was reported to be very effective and improved organizational performance. The findings were similar to Njihia and Mwirigi (2014), who reported identical results on SI in banks. However, these studies selectively evaluated only a few factors and thus did not examine the whole process of strategy implementation.

## **2.6 Summary of Research Gaps**

Critically looking at the strategy implementation literature on related studies indicates that there are common factors that agreeably are very significant in SI. They include both external and internal factors in the organization. External factors include socioeconomic, ecological, technological, political, globalization, and government regulations while internal factors include organizational culture, organization structure, effective leadership, internal resources, rewards and strategies, and staff motivation. (David 2017).

Kurendi (2013), studied factors influencing SI among flower farms in Naivasha, Kenya. Onyango (2012), studied factors affecting strategy implementation in the Kenya Sugar Industry. Muturi and Abuga (2016), studied factors influencing strategy implementation in the Tourism industry in the case of Maasai Mara National Park. Mumunya, Mokaya, and Kihara (2014), did a study on the role of leadership in effective strategy implementation in the manufacturing industry of Bidco Oil Refineries in Nakuru County, therefore, the findings of a case study design cannot be generalized to represent EPZA. This study will seek to fill the gap in the literature as highlighted by assessing the strategy implementation process at the Export Processing Zones Authority in Kenya.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This section describes the methods used to conduct the research and achieve the objectives. This section includes the research design to be adopted, data collection strategies, analysis, and presentation.

### **3.2 Research Design**

The study employed a case study research design. This was appropriately chosen for this study as according to Bryman (2008), a case study in research is helpful when there is a need to dig deep and acquire concrete, in-depth knowledge and contextual, information about one particular case. It also empowers the investigator with an opportunity to unearth the meanings, characteristics, and outcomes of the case. Churchill and Iacobucci (2009), concur that research design is an elaborate plan outlining how the investigator will acquire the required data. According to Bethlehem (2009), an appropriate design meets the basic objectivity of the study. It must also be effective in the acquisition of relevant data.

The Export Processing Zones Authority's plan implementation was examined using a case study research design. This approach allowed for a thorough investigation to ascertain the strategic responses used by EPZA. Stake (1995), asserts that a case study is the best type of research because it focuses on the intricacy and unique characteristics of the given instance. An in-depth analysis of the phenomenon of plan execution and the difficulties encountered will be involved. In-depth profiling of the characteristics of the unit under research and integration of the main concerns under inquiry in the study organization which other designs cannot do, were two benefits of adopting a case study. Top management and senior management employees working at EPZA were employed in the study.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

The study collected qualitative primary data as well as quantitative secondary data through interviews and document analysis. The interview guide was developed for Interviews that were

conducted by personal and telephone interviews; the recordings were transcribed into text. Before the interviews, an email was sent to the interviewees with topics for discussion which enabled the study participants to familiarize themselves with the study questions. Afterward, the telephone conversation was smooth.

A literature review involves evaluating printed and electronic materials contained in mission statements, annual reports, and strategic plans. The researcher uses this method to analyze and interpret data to derive meaning, understanding, and develop knowledge using EPZA strategies (Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

Data analysis was made possible through the use of thematic content analysis. According to Braun and Clark (2006), thematic content analysis is a method of qualitative data analysis. The methodology enables the researcher to group the responses into related themes as per the study variables. The researcher can therefore describe the themes identified and bring out insight into the study phenomenon in a way that is practical and helps in the achievement of the study objectives. Given that the current study was qualitative, thematic content analysis was deemed suitable.

Relevant data content analysis was undertaken to back up the qualitative data. According to Fink (2009), content analysis involves the identification of concepts within the content being analyzed and then relating and describing such content in line with the study variables.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS, AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Data analysis was presented in this chapter, and the results, as well as discussions of findings, are also laid bare. It addresses the study objectives which were strategy implementation practices, challenges as well as mitigation mechanisms of the said challenges. At the tail end, it looked at discussions of findings in line with the predictors.

### **4.2 Strategy Implementation at the Export Processing Zone Authority**

The phenomenon of the investigation was to establish strategy implementation at the Export Processing Zones Authority. Therefore, the study divides the research situation into three parts; namely, the implementation of the strategy, the difficulties in implementing the strategy, and the measures taken to reduce technical problems using the idea.

#### **4.2.1 Strategy Implementation Practices at EPZA**

In line with the strategy implementation practices at EPZA, the following questions were asked to address the objective.

The interviewees were asked to indicate whether their directorates have annual work plans and/or strategic plans that are referred to when executing their activities. All the interviewees responded in the affirmative. The EPZA directorate has annual work plans and /or strategic plans that are referred to. The following views of the participants highlight the above statement;

*“Yes, we have a strategic plan document for 2019-2023” – KII 1*

*“Yes, EPZA has a strategic plan” – KII 2*

*“Yes, our organization has a strategic plan from which each department derives its strategic plan and work plan. This aligns our department in achieving the organization’s marketing strategy, social media engagement, and activities to implement to achieve our mission” – KII 11*



*“Yes, an annual work plan approved by the board with strategies on how to achieve the set targets and objectives. The plan is based on the organization’s strategic plan” – KII 9*

The interviewees were questioned about whether the Authority's senior management is leading the way in providing leadership to make strategy execution possible. The interviewees all gave their yes votes. Leading the way in providing leadership to facilitate strategy implementation is the Authority's senior management. Below are some of their viewpoints highlighted.

*“Yes, they the management, mobilize resources and make sure staffs are well trained to achieve strategy implementation.” – KII3*

*“Yes, the Board of directors, CEO, and management are in place to give leadership direction” – KII4*

*“Yes, there is a section in charge of M&E.” – KII 12*

*“Yes, they are in the forefront. In our department accountability is ensured through monitoring and evaluation of implemented activities through review meetings with the general manager.” – KII 10*

The interviewees were asked to describe the management team's support in terms of their expertise in facilitating successful strategy execution. Most of the interviewees (10 out of 14) overwhelmingly agreed that the management offered support for enabling the successful implementation of the strategy. However, the interviewees were divergent in highlighting the nature of support for skills. A few of their views are indicated below.

*“Management staff are key drivers of the sub-indicators in the performance contract” – KII 2*

*“Generally, there is supportive management with fairly skilled personnel. However, some departments have inadequate staff to man it optimally” – KII 4*

*“In achieving a successful implementation of strategy, the management ensures that the staff gain skills through relevant training, though the appraisal review report”- KII 9*

*“The support is not fully guaranteed – trickle down of the SP has not been fully implemented.”*  
– KII 12

Leadership is necessary for strategy implementation. A transformative leadership style is very necessary for strategy implementation. In particular, the elements in transformative leadership styles such as individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation all count towards adequate leadership that ensures strategy implementation. Leadership style provides individuals with whom the buck stops. Leaders bring people together and motivate them to influence them to a positive change. It is clear that without transformative leadership, it is not possible to implement a strategy.

The interviewees were questioned about how the current Authority structure supports the process of implementing the strategy. Eight out of the fourteen interviewees largely concurred that the management provided support to enable the strategy's successful execution. From the findings, it is evident that the current Authority's structure supports strategy implementation. The following views explain this point.

*“The structure is composed of directorates that perform clear specific roles in line with the strategic plan of the organization”* – KII 1

*“Structure is linearly designed to support strategy implementation to achieve organizational objective and mandate”* – KII 3

*“The structure is fully geared for SP implementation. There is an M&E section and a board strategy committee.”* – KII 6

*“There is goodwill to support the implementation of strategy, however, more could be done to achieve synergy between departments. Thus, not operating in Silos.”* –KII 11

The structure at EPZA was a complex one. Although a flat structure is much easier in terms of strategy implementation, a complex structure is still capable of strategy implementation since

there are role separation and reporting lines that enable individual employees to perform the functions set out by the organization.

The interviewees were asked to comment on the overall Authority's culture in terms of its support of strategy implementation. Most of the interviewees (8 out of 14) overwhelmingly cited good overall Authority culture in terms of its support of strategy implementation. From the findings, it is evident that the current Authority's culture supports strategy implementation. Some of their views are highlighted below;

*"EPZA culture is very good in supporting its strategic plan" – KII 8*

*"Strategic plans are dynamic from time to time, depending on the need. Staff needs constant reminders on the strategic plan otherwise they are bound only to perform routine tasks" – KII 11*

*"The process of strategy implementation is rigorous; the implementation of strategy is too holistically to achieve and is not yet systematic. Communication to the staff at implementation levels have not been informed and educated on how their day-to-day activities contribute to the strategy implementation." – KII 9*

However, an interviewee had a contrary opinion as below;

*"Culture not supportive of SP implementation. Education needs to be carried out and embracing SP implementation."- KII 11*

Data-driven -decision-making was part of the organization's culture that had helped the organization to implement the strategy. Further, employee voice was being heard something that made feedback possible and improvement attainable. Additionally, top management support is part of the organization's culture that made it possible for the organization to implement its strategy. A healthy organizational culture that allows employees autonomy to do their work facilitates further strategy implementation.

The interviewees were asked whether they found the resources allocated to their division adequate for the successful implementation of the division's strategies. All the participants (14 out of 14) overwhelmingly mentioned that the resources are not adequate for the successful implementation of the division's strategies. EPZA lacks the adequate resources that are key to successful strategy implementation. The following views explain this point. Some of their views are highlighted below;

*“Resources are inadequate, we get limited resources from ministry, our mandate does not allow us to reach more resources.” – KII 10*

*“Resources are scarce. This is an area that is a challenge in successful of strategy” – KII 1*

*“Resource inadequacy. Though the SP is in place, resources for the achievement of strategies have been inadequate.” – KII 14*

*“The resources are not adequate as we have activities that we are unable to implement due to budget constraints.” – KII 8*

From the findings, financial resources are crucial in strategy implementation at the Export Processing Zone Authority since finance underpins every organization's operation. Financial resources are necessary to ensure that the organization creates more job opportunities as well as expands the operations to more regions and hence has more branches. Additionally, financial resources are necessary to enable the organization to conduct more research aimed at improving and developing the organization as a whole.

According to EPZA Strategic Plan (2019-2023), strategy implementation practices at the Authority make the environment conducive for investment, leveraging devolution for service delivery objectives which ensures that services from EPZA reach every part of the country. Further, infrastructure expansion especially in water, transport, energy, and logistics enables the smooth implementation of the strategy. Finally, improving quality in education and health ensures that the workforce is fit enough to deliver on the strategy of the organization.

interviewees were asked what specific plans they had developed as a department to implement the Authority's overall strategy. EPZA creates action plans to implement the Authority's overall strategy. Most of the interviewees mentioned actions being in place and mentioned strategic plans, work plans, and weekly and monthly reports as elicited by the following responses.

*"Coming up with documented weekly and monthly reports towards overall strategy. Conducting monthly department meetings to assess and review works" – KII 2*

*"Department is in charge of preparation and monitoring of the strategic plan of the organization. It is also responsible for preparing annual work plan and performance contract" – KII 5*

*"We have our work plan which guides activities to be completed to achieve those strategies."*

*"Departmental strategies. Every department has a role in every key strategy, hence set their strategies in line with the key objectives."*

The interviewees were asked what process(s) the department adopted to ensure the successful execution of the action plan. Processes are in place to implement to ensure the execution of the action plan. The interviewees mentioned following the work plan, and complying with procurement law, operation manuals, and performance contracts as indicated below;

*"We follow the work plan, we also comply with the procurement law, operation manuals" – KII 9*

*"We have our annual work plan that implements the performance contract." – KII 4*

*"Planning- Every financial year, departments do a plan and allocate resources in line with key objectives." – KII 8*

*"We have our quarterly report to review our implementation of the strategy and have different levels of management monitoring." – KII 13*

#### 4.2.2 Challenges of Strategy Implementation at EPZA

In an attempt to address the above objective, the following questions in the interview guide were asked which elicited the following varied responses.

The interviewees were asked what challenges they faced in implementing both the departmental and overall company strategy. EPZA in its journey of successful strategy implementation faces a lot of challenges that might not make the whole process successful enough.

Most of the study interviewees mentioned inadequate resources as one of the main challenges faced in implementing both the departmental and overall Authority's strategy. Some of the participants' views supporting the above argument are as follows;

*“Inadequate resources, since resources are key in every stage of strategy implementation” – KII 4*

*“Currently the inadequacy of resources poses a serious threat to successful strategy implementation because if resources are not enough, then the whole process will not be smooth” – KII 7*

*“Advocacy for budget at the ministry level.” – KII 10*

*“Resource constraints – Both human capital and financial resources are inadequate.”*

The inadequacy of financial resources derails the implementation of strategy at EPZA. This is because the expansion strategy was not possible and as such, the EPZA is not as big as it should be if otherwise, the case.

Nearly half the study participants mentioned bureaucracy as a challenge in successful strategy implementation as indicated below;

*“The process to roll out our activities to be able to run the department and this will affect the overall performance of the institution” – KII 3*

In terms of the challenges of strategy implementation at EPZA, bureaucratic bottlenecks are a major challenge to strategy implementation. Government Authorities such as EPZA have steps that must be followed so that action is taken. For instance, communication is mainly through letters and such communication must go through the supervisor of the employee. Such intransigent bottlenecks made it difficult for employees to come up with possible interventions for implementation that could lead to better strategy implementation.

The majority of the interviewees mentioned that understaffing is a key challenge when it comes to successful strategy implementation. The interviewees’ views are as follows;

*“Understaffing is a challenge; it is a challenge because a lot has to be done by the few staff who are available.” – KII5*

In addition to the challenges provided by the interviewees, secondary data obtained from the EPZA Strategic Plan (2019-2023) also yielded some challenges. For instance, it was established that the lack of space for industrial activities was a major hindrance to strategy implementation. Further, Budget constraints and delayed release of funds from the National Treasury. Additionally, the High cost of leverage particularly in the business environment hindered profit maximization. limited raw materials as a result of erratic weather and climatic changes. Similarly, the staff complement of the Authority is about 164 as opposed to an approved staff establishment of 276. The significant difference impacts negatively on effective service delivery. (EPZA Staff Establishment as of 30th June 2019)

#### **4.2.3 Measures for Mitigating Strategy Implementation Challenges**

Concerning the objective, the following question was asked;

The interviewees were asked what suggestion(s) they would give that would help EPZA avoid or minimize the strategy implementation challenges. There are a lot of suggestions that can be instrumental in helping EZPA overcome the challenges it encounters in its attempt to successfully

implement its strategies. The following themes emerged from the responses elicited by the above question;

In terms of the inadequacy of financial resources, the majority of interviewees indicated that the organization could do better by finding other sources of financial resources instead of relying on the known and available finances within the organization. When asked about the exact sources of external sources of finances, interviewees suggested that working with development partners, private-public partnerships, and innovation were some of the external financial sources that interviewees believed could be utilized by the Authority to address the problem of inadequacy of finances. The majority of interviewees were in agreement that financial resources could be mitigated by the organization working as a team and as a whole.

Further, interviewees indicated that employing more staff was necessary to mitigate the challenges of strategy implementation. This will allow tasks to be completed fast without putting the burden on the few available employees.

According to EPZA's strategic plan (2019-2023), possible measures of mitigating challenges of strategy implementation were possible. Such measures included additional government funding to address the problem of inadequate financial resources, conducting lots of research to identify a new market for EPZ products, and Advocacy to allow EPZ products to access regional markets. Further, another possible mitigation mechanism was government incentives directed at the Authority and aimed at lowering the cost of leverage. Finally, the regulation of bank loans to lower the interest rate was another possible mitigation idea for the Authority.

### **4.3 Discussion of Findings**

The key theories that guided this study were institutional theory and McKinsey's 7s Model. According to John Meyer & Brian Rowan (1977), institutional theory asserts that the institutional level of organization and formal structure development are highly determined by the institutional environment. Thus, the environment of an institution can strongly influence the development of the structures in an institution by adopting policy norms, cultures, and rules which are then entrenched as social behavior's authoritative guidelines. The findings of this study established



that culture was found to be one of the factors that influence strategy implementation at the EPZA. This is because sound organizational culture is integral in successful strategy implementation.

The McKinsey model developed by Peters and Waterman (1982) was also used in the research, and the 7s framework was developed to help managers solve the problems in the transfer process. The framework is based on seven things that must be followed to be successful in a company. The framework states that achieving these key elements can determine the success of an organization. They break them down into complex elements (systems, strategy, and structure) that are easy to define and manage. Research has shown that design is a crucial aspect of strategy implementation.

The results of this study are consistent with the results of studies by (Mbugua and Gachua, (2016); Obiero,2018), who found that management support is positive in enhancing strategy implementation. In particular, the study established that strategy implementation practices at EPZA included strategic plan development, financial resource allocation, transformative leadership, the establishment of relevant organization structure, as well as the establishment of organization culture embedded in data-driven decision-making. Such responses were corroborated by secondary data which included a conducive environment for investments, sectoral reforms such as infrastructure expansion, especially in water, transport, energy, and logistics, improving quality in education and health, and leveraging devolution for service delivery objectives. The study findings show that strategy can only be implemented if there are strategy implementation practices.

Relevant to the finding of the second variable which was the challenges of strategy implementation at EPZA is Institutional theory. The major assumption of institutional theory is that organizations are similar since they have the same code of conduct and the same regulatory environment. Similarly, they can also copy best practices from each other. As such, the challenges that the study established mirror the challenges in similar government institutions and are therefore not isolated to EPZA which means that Institutional theory supports the findings of the study in terms of the challenges that the study established. The findings also support the findings by (Eposi, E. M., & Potgieter M, (2021); Olweny,2016) who established that several

challenges such as inadequate financial resources negatively impacted strategy implementation. These findings were corroborated by secondary data from EPZA Strategic Plan (2019-2023). Secondary data from the strategic plan included challenges such as lack of space for industrial activities, Budget constraints and delay in the release of funds from the National Treasury, inadequate staff, expensive bank loans as a result of high interest rates, high cost of leverage, as well as limited raw materials as a result of erratic weather and climatic changes. The study findings show that there are challenges to strategy implementation.

The study findings were consistent with the findings of Ragui (2018), who established that several strategies were able to address the challenges of strategy implementation. Additionally, the study established that finding alternative sources of financial resources is another mitigation mechanism to ensure that the organization has other sources of financial resources other than the traditional sources, the study finds employing more staff was necessary to mitigate the challenges of strategy implementation. This will allow tasks to be completed fast without putting the burden on the few available employees. From the secondary data, it was established that the following were also measures possible to mitigate the challenges of strategy implementation; they included additional government funding, new market identification through research, leveraging East Africa market protocol, and government incentives to lower the cost of doing business in the market. The findings reveal that there is a possible mitigation mechanism for the challenges of strategy implementation.

# **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **5.1 Introduction**

The final chapter of the report addresses a summary of the findings of the study, the conclusion from the study findings as well as recommendations arising from the study findings and conclusions. Chapter Five also presents limitations that the study encountered. It then presents suggestions for further empirical study.

## **5.2 Summary of the Study.**

The study found that the best approaches for implementing a plan were: effective leadership, setting up an organizational structure, creating a positive organizational culture, and allocation of financial resources. The investigation found that the problems included bureaucracy, a convoluted organizational structure, a lack of financial resources, and insufficient staff.

The study identified alternate financial funding sources, addressed staffing issues, and promoted cooperation with other development partners.

## **5.3 Conclusion**

The study question was what is the nature of strategy implementation at the Export Processing Zones Authority in Kenya? The study concludes that strategy implementation practices are central to strategy implementation at the Export Processing Zone Authority. The study also concludes that challenges exist in the process of strategy implementation. Additionally, the study concludes that there are possible mitigation mechanisms for the challenges of strategy implementation.

Furthermore, the study concludes that for the Export Processing Zones Authority to implement strategy smoothly, the Authority must have strategy implementation practices relevant to the

strategy to be implemented. The Authority must also identify the strategy implementation challenges and provide mitigation measures through the Research, Planning, and Innovation Departments.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

The report suggests that the EPZA review its written strategies and adjust everything that has been incorporated into the strategic plan but isn't working out. The organizational culture should be examined as one of the determinants for successful plan implementation. EPZA's policies are predetermined, and it lacks an organizational culture. The report advises EPZA to take action in a corrective manner by establishing an organizational culture that would support the plan. For effective implementation of strategy at the EPZA, the study recommends that EPZA should mobilize adequate resources for effective strategy implementation.

The study also recommends that EPZA address the shortage of staff by employing more staff to mitigate the challenges of strategy implementation. This will allow tasks to be completed fast without putting the burden on the few available employees.

## **5.5 Limitations of the Study**

When the results of this study were evaluated, the following limitations were encountered. These limitations are in the concept, background and process. This study focuses solely on the implementation of the Export Processing Zones Authority's concept rather than evaluating the effectiveness of the concept. For context, the study focuses only on the Export Processing Zones Authority. A case study research design was the only one used for the investigation. The research design was effective since it made it easier for the researcher to gather comprehensive data for the study. The study's conclusions were derived from the interviewees' perspective because the data it employed were qualitative. The study's conclusions were encouraging. However, because the study solely used qualitative data, the findings' conclusions were purely subjective. The results of this study could still be relevant today, and they could also be used as a starting point for future research by other researchers.

## **5.6 Suggestion for Further Empirical Study**

The study acknowledges that one individual study can only do so much in terms of what is there to be investigated. It is further acknowledged that research is qualitative so one research adds to or enriches the other. As such it is suggested that other researchers should focus on the effect of strategy implementation on performance using quantitative methodology.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix I: University Letter of Introduction



### FACULTY OF BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT SCIENCES KISUMU CAMPUS

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**Date:** 23<sup>rd</sup> AUGUST, 2022    **REF:** UON/CHSS/SOB – KSM/ D61/9326/2017

#### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

**RE: ABDIJABAR ADAN ABDULLA.**

The above named student is in the Master of Business Administration degree program. As part of requirements for the course, he is expected to carry out a research project study on "Strategy Implementation at the Export Processing Zones Authority at Athi River." He has identified your organization for that purpose. This is to kindly request your assistance to enable the student complete the research study. The exercise is strictly for academic purposes. The student is expected to strictly adhere to all guiding principles for ethical research. Your assistance will be greatly appreciated.

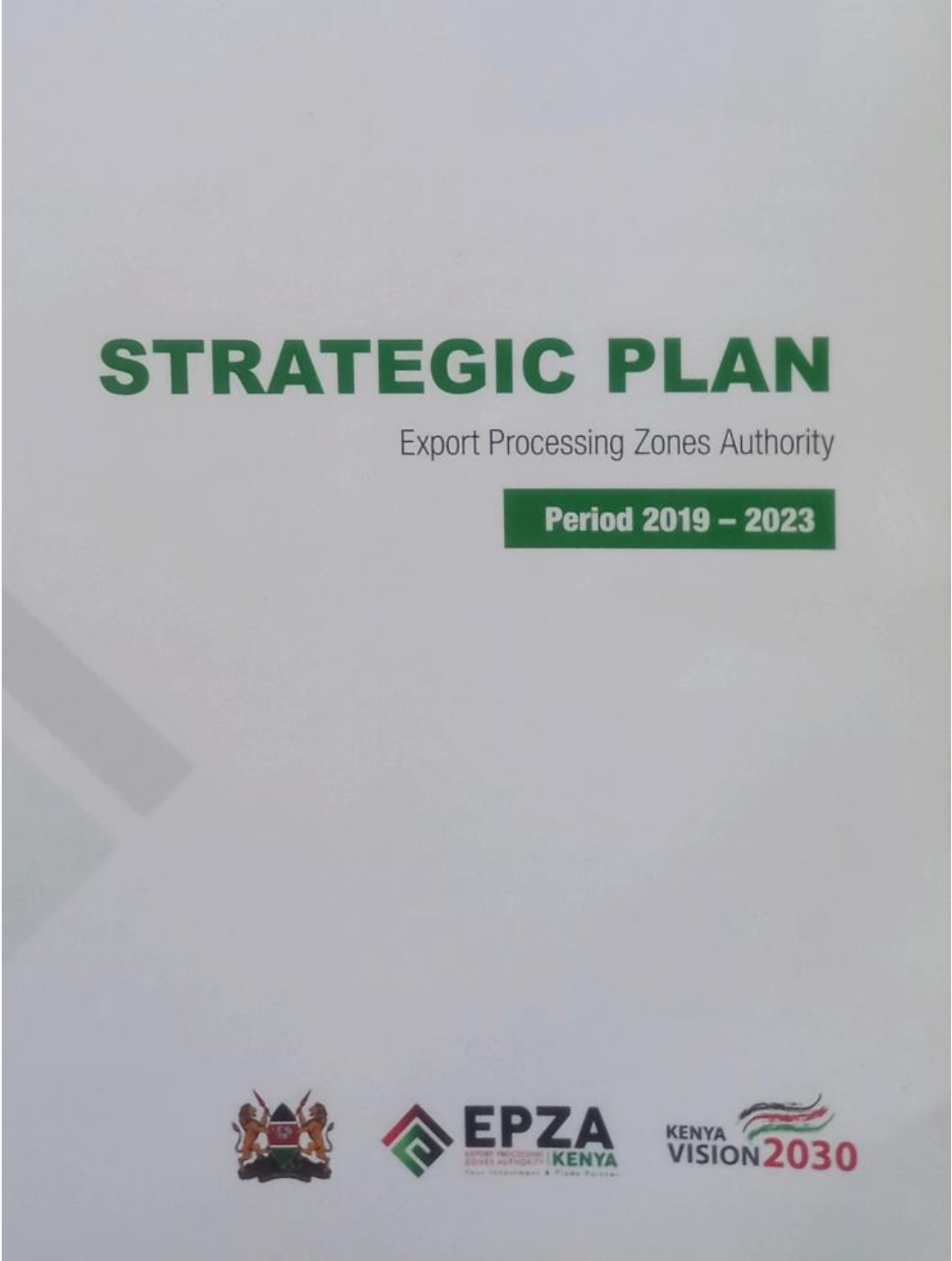
Sincerely,

**COORDINATOR  
FACULTY OF BUSINESS & MGT SCIENCE  
UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI  
KISUMU CAMPUS**

  
**DR NIXON OMORO  
COORDINATOR, FoB&MS, KISUMU CAMPUS**

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**Appendix II: EPZA Strategic Plan 2019 - 2023**



## **Appendix III: Interview Guide.**

**Adopted from the previous study. (Machuki, V. N, 2005).**

### **Strategy Implementation Practices**

1. Does your directorate have an annual work plan/ strategic plan that will always refer to when planning to execute its activities?
2. Is the senior management of the Authority at the forefront in providing leadership to enable strategy implementation?
3. How would you describe the support of management staff in terms of their skills toward enabling successful strategy implementation?
4. What would you comment on the current Authority's structure in terms of its support of the strategy implementation process?
5. What would you comment on the overall Authority's culture in terms of its support of strategy implementation?
6. Do you find the resources allocated to your division adequate for the successful implementation of the division's strategies?
7. As a department, what specific action plans do you put in place to implement the overall Authority's strategy?
8. What process(es) does the department adopt to ensure the successful execution of the action plan?

## **Challenges of Strategy Implementation**

As a department, what challenges do you face in implementing both the departmental and overall Authority's strategy?

### **Possible Measures of Mitigating Strategy Implementation Challenges**

1. What suggestion(s) would you give that will help EPZA avoid or minimize the strategy implementation challenges?
2. Please give any other comment you may have regarding the subject of this research.

## Appendix IV: Secondary Data Capture Sheet

Strategy Implementation Practices at EPZA

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Challenges of Strategy Implementation at EPZA

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Possible measures to mitigate strategy implementation at EPZA

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME**