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Abstract

Highly competitive and fast shifting market conditions require business enterprises to possess superior organizational capabilities for success. Previous studies have identified persistent challenges including leadership processes and complex work environments as constraints to organizational success. The freight forwarding sector in Kenya grapples with challenges related to high operational costs, poor co-ordination, and rapid developments in information technology and related insecurity. Literature on organizational leadership has neither addressed nor empirically tested the dimensions of gauging effectiveness of freight forwarding firms. Specifically, there is lack of empirical investigation linking organizational context with leadership process and effectiveness of freight forwarding firms. This study sought to investigate the moderating effect of organizational context on the relationship between leadership process (tactical, strategic, and situational influence) and effectiveness of freight forwarding firms in Nairobi City County, Kenya. Through a mixed methods approach, the study adopted explanatory sequential design anchored on the Balanced Score Card model, Institutional Theory and Structuralism Theory. Target population was 400 freight forwarding firms practicing in Nairobi City County, from which 276 respondents were selected through stratified random sampling. Quantitative data was collected through questionnaires with a response rate of 84% while qualitative data was collected from 10 key informants through in-depth interviews. Descriptive statistics used were frequencies, means and

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standard deviation, while regression analysis was used to test the study hypotheses. Qualitative data was subjected to thematic analysis. Results established that organizational context has a significant moderating effect on the relationship between leadership process and firm effectiveness. With leadership process viewed through input > processing > output logic, the external environment provides streams of opportunities in terms of inputs, which firms can harness to create competitive advantage and effectiveness. Findings demonstrated the link between leadership process, organizational context, and effectiveness. Management should entrench effective leadership process through active deployment of appropriate influence strategies to generate key capabilities and conducive work contexts. Government policies should promote collaborative approaches among supply chain partners. The study recommends future research to expand the conceptual, methodological, and contextual scope for more representative conclusions.

Keywords: *Freight Forwarding Firms, Leadership Process, Organizational Effectiveness, Organizational Context*

1.0 Introduction

In order to remain competitive, business organizations need to develop the capabilities to adapt to fast changing environments. A key role of leadership is to shape organizations to perform well in meeting individual, organizational, and community goals and needs (Daft, 2016; Kasapoglu, 2018). Kareem (2019) contended that developing firm's workforce and maintaining capability to utilize the available resources optimally are major ways leaders can shape organizations for competitiveness. Effective leadership is thus linked to organizational effectiveness and is conditioned by the circumstances under which it is exercised (Antonakis, 2018).

The need for effective leadership process in the freight forwarding sector is especially critical given the difficulties, complexities, and cost implications in international cargo clearance and transport processes. The World Bank (2017) estimated that the cost of border delays relating to information requirements, procedures and lost business opportunities ranges between 2% and 15 % of the total value of goods globally traded. In China, Rahman et al. (2019) established that freight forwarding firms faced challenges of local culture; price pressure to reduce logistics cost, increase profit and to maintain competitive advantage; government regulations; and high transportation costs. Other challenges include underdeveloped infrastructure; lack of expertise; inadequate education and training; dynamic development of new technology, and information technology security, compatibility and reliability (Brdulak & Brdulak, 2021).

In Africa, Sakyi and Afesorgbor (2019) observed that clearance delays, inefficient or insufficient communication and transport systems, excessive documentation, bureaucratic procedures, poor coordination between agencies, and corruption, are factors that impede trade facilitation. Cross-border trade in Sub-Saharan Africa for instance, is more costly in the region when compared with other developing countries because of the long hours and high costs involved in clearing consignments (Abdoulaye, 2020). This implies low quality of trade processes and low trade performance levels of related firms.

East African Community (EAC) economies also face challenges in cargo clearance. In 2017, non-tariff barriers costs were estimated at 1.7% in Rwanda and 2.8% in Kenya of the respective country's GDP (Overseas Development Institute, 2017). Kenya's logistics performance had slowed down significantly as evidenced by the drop in Logistics Performance Index (LPI) from 3.33 in 2016 to 2.81 in 2018 (World Bank, 2021). The same report recorded a fall in rank for

Kenya among the top-performing lower-middle-income economies from number 42 in 2016 to number 68 in 2018. Since LPI performance is strongly correlated with quality of service, Kenya's LPI value, and by extension national and regional economies, stand to gain from improved leadership processes in the freight forwarding firms.

Leadership Process

Different perspectives on leadership suggest that there is no one common explanation for the construct. The perspectives underscore the construct as having an evolving conceptualization due to generational differences and growing global influences, among other factors (Northouse, 2019). Recent conceptualizations view leadership as a broader process of shared influence spread among organization members (Lord et al., 2017; Yukl, 2013). This is a departure from the "typical notion of a single person around whom the rest of the group circles and who is the arbiter of decisions and purpose" (Wassenaar & Pearce, 2018, p. 169). In contesting this view, some scholars however argue that given the hierarchical and organizational nature of most organizations, the implementation of any form of shared leadership often poses challenges (Rodrigues, 2019).

Overall, leadership as a process implies that it is not a characteristic or a trait in the leader alone, but an interactive process occurring among the leader, those being led, and other individuals (Bullington, 2016; Northouse, 2019). Northouse (2019) stated that interactions occur between the organization members and the conditions constituting the organization's environment. The process also includes subsequent outcomes and how they depend on the characteristics and perceptions of leaders and followers (Antonakis & Day, 2018; Daft, 2015).

Influence as the component common to nearly all leadership conceptualizations constitutes the core and represents a fundamental mechanism for leadership (Stojanovic-Aleksic & Krstic, 2016; Yukl, 2013). Bacon (2012) viewed influence as "the art of getting others to take your lead - to believe something you want them to believe, think in a way you want them to think, or do something you want them to do" (p. 3). Indeed, this definition finds foundation on an earlier assertion by Yukl (1998) that influence is "any action or behaviour that leads to changes in attitudes or behaviour of another person or group" (p. 19).

Various influence approaches have been advanced. Bacon (2012) developed a broad framework of approaches consisting of rational approaches (explaining or telling), social approaches (finding common ground), and emotional approaches (inspirational). Within these approaches, three key influence strategies crucial in firm settings are suggested (Bloom; 2019; Daft, 2015; Yukl, 2013). They include tactical influence, strategic influence, and situational influence, conceptualised in this study as constructs of the independent variable.

Through tactical influence, various tactics are used to assert influence and get things done (Daft, 2015; Yukl, 2013). Tactics include rational persuasion, liking, appealing to a higher vision, developing allies, reciprocity, and making direct appeals. These techniques are based more on the application of soft personal power than hard position power, or the use of punishments and rewards (Daft, 2015).

Strategic influence refers to strategies employed in building influence needed in the future (Bloom, 2019; De Kluyver & Pearce, 2015). It includes gaining leadership in technical, business, or social aspects; as well as building connections, credibility, knowledge, and key infrastructure. Cortes and Herrmann (2021) identified the two major forms of strategic influence. Discretionary influence involves the exercise of individual authority and strategic decision-making to infuse the firm with

individual ideas and conceptions. On the other hand, architectural influence involves shaping the firm through structure and processes to permit the participation of organizational members in development initiatives (Muninger et al., 2019).

Lastly, situational influence is based upon the notion that human behaviour is influenced by situational factors. Scholars hold that to the extent one perceives a matter and interprets events is a function of prevailing contextual situations (Brdulak & Brdulak, 2021; Daft, 2016; Varga, 2018). To this end, an effective way to influence others is to first diagnose and understand their world, the forces that shape their needs, concerns, and goals (Cohen & Bradford, 2017).

Organizational Context

The realization of goals is effective through the wise utilization of natural, human, financial, and technological resources (Van Wart, 2013). Resources constitute part of the environment “existing outside of the organization which have the potential to affect part or all of the organization” (Daft, 2016, p. 76). Contextual factors influence the social construction of leader and follower roles, as well as how individuals enact those roles (Carsten et al., 2010). This is because firms draw cues from these factors when making decisions on the behaviours needed to optimize on the available opportunities.

Among factors in the freight forwarding contexts include legal regulations, financial resources sector, sociocultural conditions, politics, trade agreements, and international trends (Brdulak & Brdulak, 2021). The factors are either task related when they directly affect the capacity of an organization to realise its goals, or general when they have an indirect influence (Daft, 2016). Organizations should therefore be able to develop the capacity to deal with external expectations and related pressures (Awan et al., 2017; Fox-Wolfgramm et al., 1998). Responses by firms to their external environment should however be acceptable by stakeholders (Dillard et al., 2004; Mainardes et al, 2011). Indeed this leadership issue has not been addressed within the freight forwarding sector. Constant rows reported among its various stakeholders serve as evidence (Freight Logistics, 2021; Kenya Association of Manufacturers [KAM], 2020).

Stakeholders in the freight forwarding sector have raised concerns touching on freight forwarders in Kenya. For instance, the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA, 2019) recommended the creation and sensitization of a self-regulatory code among freight forwarders. This was meant to minimize cargo clearance delays.

Delays in cargo clearance have negative cost implications on trade. Data by Kenya Ports Authority (2020) shows that in the financial year 2019/2020, about Ksh.8 billion representing 15% of operating revenue came from cargo storage related costs. Although the authority reported improvements in cargo clearance and uptake efficiencies by freight forwarders during the year, the level of storage costs was still significant. In addition, data indicating 40% of import containers having stayed at the Nairobi Inland Container Depot for more than 21 days was a further call for urgent intervention. Clearly, there is therefore need to explore how the challenges can be addressed through a leadership process which has the capacity to deal with the diverse and fragmented nature of the industry, embracing collaboration, technology uptake and other innovative interventions.

The current study conceptualized organizational context as the moderating variable in the relationship between leadership process and organizational effectiveness. It was measured using factors in the firm’s microenvironment level. A firm interfaces with these factors in the course of its business, which have a direct and immediate impact on the firm (Daft, 2016; Egbunike &

Okerekeoti, 2018). They include relationships with stakeholders, stakeholder needs and expectations, as well as the competitive landscape (Camilleri, 2018; Muthimi & Kilika, 2018).

Organizational Effectiveness

A major goal of organizations is to utilize resources in a manner that makes the best use of their ability to create value for stakeholders (Daft, 2016; Jones, 2013; Miles, 2012). From this standpoint, Robbins (1990) conceptualized organizational effectiveness (OE) as the degree to which an organization realises its objectives; acquires its resources; satisfies all its strategic constituencies; and, emphasises in new-product innovation, market share, return on investment, and job security. Specifically, OE is defined “as the degree to which an organization attains its short-term (ends) and long-term (means) goals, the selection of which reflects strategic constituencies, the self-interest of the evaluator, and the life stage of the organization” (p. 77). Jones (2013) described it as the organization’s ability to function responsively by efficiently converting skills and resources into goods and services. OE is thus “an all-encompassing concept about how products or services are produced or provided” (Ivancevich et al., 2014, p. 11).

This study used four approaches of measuring OE as the dependent variable namely, goal-attainment approach, system resource approach, strategic-constituencies approach, and competing-values approach. According to Robbins (1990), goal-attainment approach measures the extent an organization is capable of achieving its goals. System resource approach according to Cameron (1978; as cited in Kareem, 2019) is “the organization's ability to exploit its environment to obtain scarce and valuable resources to achieve goals and to maintain balance and stability” (p. 33). Strategic-constituencies approach assumes that a firm is aware of an individual or group of individuals who are critical to the firm’s long-term survival. By meeting the needs of that individual or group, the firm avoids any adverse action from them (Kareem, 2019; Robbins, 1990). Lastly, the competing values approach as a measure of OE is based on the perspective and values of the individuals making the evaluation. Kareem (2019) identified common competing values as productivity, adaptation to changing environment, resource optimization, and stabilization.

The above measures are however not exhaustive since other indicators can be used to evaluate firm effectiveness based on the size of the firm and the kind of services offered (Arnold et al., 2011; Kulachai et al., 2021). However, as observed by Power (1996; as cited in Francescini et al., 2019), OE generally improves with increasing objectivity and when outcomes are linked with resources. This study therefore fills a conceptual gap in providing an understanding and application of effectiveness in freight forwarding firms.

Freight Forwarding Firms in Kenya

Freight forwarding is a trade facilitation service in the international supply chain (Huang et al., 2019; Min, 2023). Mainly acting as intermediaries, freight forwarders perform customs clearance, cargo consolidation, transport, warehousing, packaging, and security services (Rahman, et al., 2019; Song & Yeo, 2017). Supply chain involves manufacture, inventory control, logistics, cargo handling, and management. As Huang et al. (2019) observed, coordination of supply chain networks has continually become more complex, with overall effectiveness relying more on the expertise of intermediaries. The state of the freight forwarding sector is thus a strong indicator of the condition of a country’s economy (Brdulak and Brdulak, 2021; Saripalle, 2018).

In Kenya, roles duplication and lack of seamless cooperation and coordination among agencies are major sources of trade bottlenecks in the freight forwarding sector (KAM, 2020). A notable

challenge is the absence of a representative leadership structure, largely attributable to the fact that the sector has remained professionally unrecognized, and has limited research on leadership (Arnold et al., 2011; Freight Logistics, 2021). Against this background, the study sought to examine the moderating effect of organizational context on the relationship between leadership process and effectiveness of freight forwarding firms in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

2.0 Literature Review

To identify research gaps, the study reviewed both theoretical and empirical literature.

2.1 Theoretical Review

In explaining the nature and interactions of the key constructs, the study was anchored on the Balanced Score Card model, Institutional Theory and Structuralism Theory.

2.1.1 The Balanced Score Card Model

Theorized by Kaplan and Norton in 1996, Balanced Score Card model (BSC) is a tool initially used for measuring organizational performance, but has since transformed into a framework for clarification and transmission of strategies (Frederico et al., 2020; Kaplan & Norton, 2001). The framework examines value-creation in organizations from four strategic perspectives namely, financial (risk, profitability, and growth); customer (value creation and differentiation), internal business processes (creating customer and shareholder satisfaction); and learning and growth (innovation, change and growth). The model focuses organizations on strategy as an ongoing process using top leadership to mobilize change.

The model's four strategic objectives largely align with measures of firm effectiveness. In addition, leadership is seen as key in focusing the organization on strategy hence the need for deployment of the right influence strategies. Furthermore, the postulates of the model stress the need for firms to exploit resources in their environments sustainably. This is applicable in the freight forwarding sector, which faces heavy demands from stakeholders for superior performance (World Bank, 2021). Despite concerns that the model lacks flexibility and that its implementation tends to produce work overload and a substantial level of resources (Molleman, 2007), it is still relevant in relating how freight forwarding firms can employ leadership process for operational effectiveness. It therefore anchored leadership process as the independent variable and organizational effectiveness as the dependent variable.

2.1.2 Institutional Theory

Organizations consist of factors such as tradition, culture, economic and legal environment. These factors influence social interactions and other processes by either constraining or enabling decisions and activities. Institutional Theory seeks to explain the processes for organizational behaviour and the effect of the behaviour patterns within a wider inter-organizational context. Contemporary Institutional Theory finds its origin in the studies by Meyer and Rowan (1977), who postulated that, "Institutional rules function as myths which organizations incorporate to gain legitimacy, resources, stability, and enhanced survival prospects" (p. 340). The implication is that many organizations ritually incorporate the conceived rationality into their policies, techniques, programs, products, and services. Consequently, their organizational structures align with the institutional context for stability and gaining much needed resources.

Elaborating on the theory, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) identified three key isomorphic forces: coercive pressures from the government, powerful, resource-controlling organizations, and

communities; imitative or mimetic pressures from behaviours of other organizations; and, normative pressures from social expectations. Professionals and other players generate the social expectations through lobbying for adoption of particular policies and practices. Such factors tend to make organizations similar in structure and policies that over time become their culture.

Unique contextual features of freight forwarding firms moderate the application of leadership process for effective service delivery. Furthermore, achieving organizational effectiveness is not always easy because different stakeholders expect different things from the organization, and managers must hence ensure a balance of their needs and interests (Awan, et al., 2017; Daft, 2016). Institutional Theory was therefore useful to anchor in the study organizational context and related characteristics of the freight forwarding firms.

2.1.3 Structuralism Theory

Structuralism originally developed as a method to study the underlying patterns of social life. Structuralists claim that not all human activity is natural or essential but it is also constructed (Sanusi, 2012). Its foundations dating 1857-1913 are associated with Ferdinand de Saussure, and later proponents including Jacques Lacan, Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, and Michel Foucault. The theory examines the general laws by which structures work, for insights on human experiences (Javad & Masoud, 2016). At its core, it contends that objective reality does not exist but that systems can be broken into their elements based on the principle of an infinite set. The singular units of any system make meaning only as they relate with each other in making a determined system (Han, 2021). In other words, each system and its elements are not complete but an integral part of another larger and still incomplete system

Structuralism, according to Smith (2020) looks at the visible and conscious human patterns expressed in ideas, beliefs, and behaviours to unearth how those patterns are actually consequences, effects, or outputs of underlying universal and mental causes, mechanisms, or some deep structures. However, the notion that the individual disappears more and more in the coding process is perceived as a setback of the theory (Frank, 1989). Overall, the theory supports the qualitative aspects in this study to explain how leadership process as a social activity is enacted in diverse circumstances for desired organizational outcomes.

2.2 Empirical Review

The study reviewed literature on organizational context as it relates with to organizational outcomes. Creswell and Poth (2017) argued that the processes people experience, their contexts, their deeper thoughts and behaviours influence their actions. A changing external environment may determine an organization's failure or survival, and firms must therefore develop the capacity to extract from the environment needed information and resources (Awan et al., 2017; Chege et al., 2020). On this basis, it is argued that new organizational forms fitting the prevailing external environment usually emerge to occupy new niches.

Through an empirical quantitative approach, Awan et al. (2017) sought to understand from manufacturing firms in Pakistan the effect of pressure from stakeholders and adoption of sustainable practices in supply chain on sustainability performance. Data was obtained through survey from 272 manufacturing firms selected through stratified sampling. Descriptive and inferential results established that the implementation of sustainable supply chain management in firms was increased by stakeholder pressure. This meant that stakeholders could help firms acquire and develop vital capabilities in response to the requirements for social sustainability. Working

jointly with stakeholders to design effective policies is thus important to a firm's achievement of its goals. The study however only obtained data from single participants and few firms hence introducing common source bias in the results. Stakeholder pressure was viewed as the independent variable while the current study conceptualized it as a moderating factor.

Wang and Sengupta (2016) through a quantitative study investigated the relationships between "stakeholder relationships, corporate brand equity, and firm performance". Secondary data was obtained from 81 multinational firms in the United States, Europe, and Asia. Descriptive statistics and correlations were used to analyse continuous variables including multi-stakeholder relations, while simultaneous equations method was used in analysing firm performance. A positive correlation was identified between stakeholder relationships and brand equity, which mediated the relationship between stakeholder relationships and firm performance. While the study analysed secondary data from existing databases and conceptualized stakeholder relationships as the independent variable, the current study relied on primary data and regarded stakeholders as a factor in the organizational microenvironment, moderating the relationship between leadership process and organizational effectiveness.

A study in China by Quan et al. (2018) examined firms' sustainable development in the context of the government policies supporting green initiatives. From 646 firms selected with five years period data, 3357 firm-year observations were made. The firms ranged from those dealing in mining, food manufacturing, textile, printing, and media. Data was analysed using both descriptive and multiple regression techniques. Results established a positive relationship between sustainable development through government support and economic performance. It was established that resources controlled by the government, including tax benefits and bank loans, were the means for transforming effects of investments into gains. However, the positive association only held for state-owned firms owing to the preferential treatment they received. The study focused on organization's economic performance and not organizational effectiveness as the dependent variable. Additionally, the study's sample consisted of only those firms with the needed data hence restrictive and findings not representative. The current study was cross sectional, used mixed methods approach, and employed simple random, stratified and purposeful sampling techniques.

A mixed methods study to explore the impact of government financial support on the performance of Nigerian Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) was undertaken by Peter et al. (2018). Data was collected through survey and semi-structured interviews. Using stratified and simple random techniques, 360 respondents who were either SME owners or managers were sampled for the study. The quantitative data was analysed using multiple regression and descriptive statistics while the interviews were subjected to thematic analysis. Findings established that the effect of government financial assistance on the performance of SMEs was significant. The current study sought to establish the effect of organizational context on the relationship between leadership process and effectiveness among the freight forwarding firms in Nairobi City County.

In an empirical study, Egbunike and Okerekeoti (2018) explored the interrelationships between macroeconomic factors, firm characteristics and financial performance in manufacturing firms listed on the Nigerian Stock Exchange. The study specifically investigated the effect of inflation rates, interest rates, exchange rates, and the rate of GDP growth, on financial performance. Based on *ex post facto* research design, 163 firms were sampled through non-probability method, and multiple linear regression was used to validate study hypotheses. Findings showed no significant effect on financial performance for interest rate and exchange rate, but a significant effect was recorded for rate of inflation and GDP. The study used factors both in the firm's internal and

external context as independent variables in determining the interrelationships with financial performance. The present study explored factors only in the firms' microenvironment as the moderating variable in the relationship between leadership process and firm effectiveness.

Daferighe et al. (2019) undertook a study to establish the effect of social activity practices and firm profitability employing a descriptive research design. Social practices included activities that benefited stakeholders within firm's immediate environment. Data was collected from 15 firms in the manufacturing, oil and gas, and building and construction sectors in Nigeria. The firms were selected using purposive sampling method. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression, and hypotheses testing through F statistics. Findings established that social welfare activities and accounting had insignificant positive relationship with firm profitability. The study reported insignificant positive relationship between investment in social activities and profitability, suggesting that firms should cautiously support these activities. It was however observed that only health related social activities were considered. Further, the study focused on profitability and not firm effectiveness in totality hence the findings may not replicate in other contexts.

A quantitative survey to examine the relationship between technology and firm performance, considering the role of innovativeness was undertaken in Tharaka-Nithi County, Kenya, by Chege et al. (2020). Using a semi-structured questionnaire, data was collected from 240 randomly sampled local enterprises comprising of small-scale farmers and SMEs. Structural equation modeling technique was used in data analysis. Findings indicated that firm performance was positively influenced by technology innovation; hence, the recommendation that entrepreneurs needed to embrace technology innovation for enhanced firm performance. The study used technology as the independent variable in determining performance while the current study considered it as a moderating factor within organizational context. Further, while the study was undertaken among farmers and SMEs in Tharaka-Nithi County, the present enquiry targeted freight forwarding firms in Nairobi City County, employing a mixed methods approach.

3.0 Research Methodology

The study adopted a pragmatic philosophical view, applying both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This philosophy supports the notion that one approach may be better than the other for answering a particular question, and the use of both therefore yields better results (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Explanatory sequential design was employed allowing quantitative data to be collected and analysed first, followed by qualitative data (Lune & Berg, 2017). The target population comprised of 400 licensed freight forwarding firms operating in Nairobi City County in 2023, who were members of Kenya International Freight and Warehousing Association (KIFWA). This approach is consistent with past studies that used membership-based populations (Egbunike & Okerekeoti, 2018; Quan et al., 2018; Wandiga et al., 2019). A sample of 92 firms determined using Cochran's (1977; as cited in Ahmad & Halim, 2017) formula was randomly chosen from which 276 respondents were selected through stratified random sampling. Respondents comprised of top-level management, middle level management, and lower level management.

A structured questionnaire with closed-ended questions, and a semi-structured interview guide were used to collect primary data. Quantitative data analysis used descriptive and inferential techniques. Pearson moment correlation analysis showed the relationships between study variables while regression analysis determined the direct and moderating effects. The predictive

power of the models was based on the coefficient of determination (R^2). Using F-statistic, the significance of the models was tested based on T-test at 0.05 significance level. Qualitative data was analysed through content analysis, which entails “a careful, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of data in an effort to identify patterns, themes, assumptions, and meanings” (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 182). It is also a means by which to study social processes that have occurred over long periods, reflected as trends (Miles et al., 2014).

Empirical Models

To assess the effect of leadership process on effectiveness of freight forwarding firms, organizational effectiveness was regressed on leadership process. The following simple linear regression model was used:

$$EFF_O = \beta_0 + \beta_1 LP + \varepsilon$$

To establish the moderating effect of external organizational context on the relationship between leadership process and effectiveness among freight forwarding firms, linear regressions models were employed in two steps recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986):

Step one: The R Square value (R^2_1) and the significance level ($p < 0.05$) of regressing organizational effectiveness on leadership process was noted.

$$EFF_O = \beta_0 + \beta_1 LP + \varepsilon \dots\dots\dots \text{Step 1}$$

Step two: External organizational context was introduced and the new R Square value (R^2_2) and the significance level ($p < 0.05$) for the interaction term between the independent variable and moderating variable noted.

$$EFF_O = \beta_0 + \beta_1 LP + \beta_2 OC + \beta_3 LP * OC + \varepsilon \dots\dots\dots \text{Step 2}$$

Where,

- EFF_O = Composite index for organizational effectiveness
- β_0 = Constant
- $\beta_1, \beta_2 \& \beta_3$ = Beta coefficients
- LP = Composite index for leadership process
- OC = Composite index for organizational context
- $LP * OC$ = Interaction of leadership process and organizational context

Composite indices for the variables from the data were computed using the weighted harmonic mean, which was adjusted to provide for the relative weight (Gupta & Kapoor, 2002; Kilika et al., 2012).

Memon et al. (2018) observed that the moderator hypothesis is supported if the interaction path is significant. Hence, the regression coefficient for the interaction term, β_3 , provided an estimate of the moderation effect of organizational context on the relationship between leadership process and organizational effectiveness. If β_3 is statistically different from zero, there is evidence that organizational context significantly moderates the relationship between the leadership process and effectiveness of freight forwarding firms. The magnitude of the moderation was established by identifying the level of significance of beta coefficient for the interactive term (Field, 2013;

Kothari, 2004). Thus, if $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis was rejected, and if $p > 0.05$, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

4.0 Results and Discussions

Response Rate

From 276 questionnaires issued, 232 were returned, forming an overall response rate of 84%. A response rate greater than 50 per cent is satisfactory for data analysis (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Category wise, there was 78% response rate among top-level management, 84% among middle level management, and 90% among the lower-level management.

Demographic Information Analysis

The study sought to determine several demographic characteristics of the respondents. In respect of gender, majority of the respondents were male (65%) and the minority female (35%), suggesting that the freight forwarding the sector was male dominated. It was also established that majority of the respondents had worked in the freight forwarding firms for more than five years and hence possessed sufficient information needed by the study. Al-Khamaiseh et al. (2020) and Northouse (2019) held that as employees develop more skills through experience and get committed to the organization, they tend to demonstrate more leadership behaviours.

The study established that 73% of the firms were local in their operations while 27% were international. This could imply that there was more demand for local services than international services. It could also mean that either local firms had no capacity to operate and trade outside the country or the existence of internal barriers constraining the establishment of international freight forwarding firms in Kenya. Huang et al. (2019) pointed out that severe competition from local firms is a common barrier to international firms entering the sector across the world.

Descriptive Analysis

The study aimed to determine the extent to which the study variables manifested in freight forwarding firms in Nairobi City County. Frequencies, mean scores, and standard deviations were calculated for leadership process, organizational context, and organizational effectiveness. The results are summarised below.

Leadership Process

The assessment on leadership process was based on 14 key items across tactical influence, strategic influence, and situational influence strategies. All the items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “no extent” to “very high extent”. Respondents indicated the extent to which firm applied leadership process for better relationships and effectiveness. Results showed an overall aggregate mean score of 4.12 and a standard deviation of 0.758. This implied that to a high extent the respondents agreed that freight forwarding firms applied leadership process for effectiveness.

The findings were consistent with conclusions made by Groves and LaRocca (2011) that by creating strong perceptions of shared values, leaders have the capability to influence beliefs, perspective and willingness of others to engage in extra-role citizenship behaviours that address organizational problems. Cohen and Bradford (2017) argued that an effective way to influence others is to first diagnose and understand their circumstances in terms of competence and commitment to tasks and relationships. This way, leaders can employ matching influence techniques for superior results.

Organizational Context

The assessment on organizational context was based on eight key items. The items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “no extent” to “very high extent”. Respondents were required to indicate the extent to which organizational context influenced firm effectiveness. The aggregate mean score was 4.214 and a standard deviation of 0.735, indicating that to a high extent, respondents agreed that the external environment such as government agencies, regulatory bodies, customers and suppliers influenced the effectiveness of their firms.

Organizational Effectiveness

Organizational effectiveness was assessed based on nine elements. Using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree”, respondents were required to state their opinion on their firm’s effectiveness “in relation to goal attainment, resource acquisition, strategic stakeholders, and competing values” (Ndonye et al., 2024). The aggregate mean score was 4.46 with standard deviation of 0.586 signifying that respondents to a high extent agreed that firms applied effectiveness. This suggests that majority of the freight forwarding firms had clear organizational goals, had the ability to obtain necessary inputs, met stakeholders needs, and optimized resource utilization for stability.

The results agree with comments by Daft (2016) maintaining that firms must cultivate the ability to utilize resources in a manner that best creates stakeholder value. This includes approaches like innovating fast; securing, managing, and controlling valued skills; and efficiently converting scarce resources into goods and services (Jones, 2013). Specifically, findings underscore that effectiveness denotes “the degree to which an organization attains its goals” (Ndonye et al., 2024, p.118). Past studies have suggested that the kind of leadership deployed has a direct influence on a variety of organizational outcomes (Al-Khamaiseh et al., 2020; Mwai et al., 2018; Mwesigwa, 2018).

Correlation Analysis

The study conducted analysis to determine the relationship between variables using Pearson’s coefficient of correlation (r). Akoglu (2018) recommended that correlation values of ± 0.40 and above, between ± 0.30 and ± 0.39 , and below ± 0.30 imply strong correlation, moderate correlation, and low correlation respectively. Table 1 is a summary of the results.

Table 1: Correlational Results

		Organizational effectiveness	Tactical influence	Strategic influence	Situational influence	Organizational context
Organizational effectiveness	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
	N	232				
Tactical influence	Pearson Correlation	.295**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000				
	N	232	232			
Strategic influence	Pearson Correlation	.275**	.248**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000			
	N	232	232	232		
Situational influence	Pearson Correlation	.364**	.528**	.409**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		
	N	232	232	232	232	
Organizational context	Pearson Correlation	.313**	.355**	.644**	.515**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	232	232	232	232	232

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

Results show that the correlation coefficients between factors of leadership process and organizational effectiveness were 0.295 (tactical influence), 0.275 (strategic influence), and 0.364 (situational influence), implying weak and moderate positive correlations. The associated *p*-values were significant at 0.000. The findings were in agreement with Ali and Anwar (2021), Chaturvedi et al. (2019) and Dahri et al. (2019) who established that influence tactics used in leadership have a significant positive relationship with organizational outcomes. Madigan et al. (2020) also opined that work experience, age, and gender, as well as organizational size and maturity level determine the kind of tactics employed in an organization.

The findings also show that the correlation coefficient between organizational context and organizational effectiveness was 0.313 and the significance value was less than 0.01, indicating a moderate positive correlation. These findings were consistent with studies by Daferighe et al.

(2019), which found a positive relationship between social welfare activities by organization stakeholders and firm profitability. Other studies reported significant positive relationships between technology, stakeholder pressure, and government subsidies; and organizational outcomes (Chege et al., 2020; Peter et al., 2018; Wang & Sengupta, 2016).

Regression Analysis

The study sought to investigate the moderating effect of organizational context on the relationship between leadership process and effectiveness of freight forwarding firms in Nairobi City County, Kenya. Linear regression was employed through two steps recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986):

Step one involved regressing organizational effectiveness on leadership process, noting R Square value (R^2_1) and the significance level ($p < 0.05$). The results on the direct relationship were as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Regression Results for Composite Leadership Process

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.398 ^a	.158	.154	.27519		
ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3.270	1	3.270	43.183	.000 ^b
	Residual	17.418	230	.076		
	Total	20.688	231			
Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	3.326	.174		19.101	.001
	Leadership process	.092	.014	.398	6.571	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Effectiveness

b. Predictors: (Constant), Leadership process

Results in Table 2 show that the adjusted R Square (R^2) was .154 indicating that the model was able to predict effectiveness of freight forwarding firms in Nairobi City County by 15.4%. In addition, F-statistic was 43.183, which was greater than the F-critical value (1,230=3.882). The p -value for the model was $.000 < 0.05$ indicating that the F-value was significant. The model was therefore fit in predicting organizational effectiveness as summarised below.

$$EFF_O = 3.326 + 0.398L_P + \varepsilon$$

Step two involved introducing external organizational context and noting the new R Square value (R^2_2) and the significance level ($p < 0.05$) for the interaction term between leadership process and external organizational context. The results were as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Regression Results for Moderator Organizational Context

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.404a	.163	.156	.27498		
ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3.373	3	1.124	14.806	.000 ^b
	Residual	17.315	228	.076		
	Total	20.688	231			
Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	3.361	1.823		1.844	.000
	Leadership process	.206	.450	.285	.456	.000
	Organizational context	.021	.431	.030	.048	.001
	Leadership process*organizational context	.009	.105	.103	.090	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational effectiveness

b. Predictors: (Constant), Leadership process*organizational context, Organizational context, Leadership process

The model summary results in Table 3 show that the adjusted R Square (R^2) was 0.156, meaning that the model predicted 15.6% of the changes in effectiveness. The adjusted R^2 increased by 0.002 compared to the overall regression model with a value of 0.154 shown in Table 2. Hence, the variation in organizational effectiveness increased from 15.4% to 15.6% after introducing external organizational context. The findings on ANOVA depict that the F-critical was 14.806, which was greater than the F-critical value (3,228=2.644) hence the model was significant. Similarly, the findings showed a significant p -value of $.000 < 0.05$. The coefficient results were fitted in the model as follows:

$$EFF_O = 3.361 + 0.285L_P + 0.030O_C + 0.103L_P * O_C + \varepsilon$$

The model shows that holding leadership process, organizational context, and the interactive term between leadership process and organizational context ($L_P * O_C$) at a constant, organizational effectiveness would be at a constant of 3.361. The results also show that organizational context had a significant effect on the relationship between leadership process and organizational effectiveness considering the significance of 0.000, which is less than the selected p -value of 0.05.

The decision on the hypothesis was made using the criteria recommended by Memon et al. (2018), that the moderator hypothesis is supported if the interaction path is significant. The beta coefficient

for the interactive term, β_3 , was 0.103, and the p -value was significant at .001. This means that the estimated moderating effect of organizational context was significant at β_3 of 0.103. The study therefore concluded that organizational context has a significant moderating effect on the relationship between leadership process and effectiveness of the freight forwarding firms.

The above results are comparable with those of earlier researchers. Chege et al. (2020) indicated that firm performance is positively influenced by external environment factors such as technology, hence the recommendation that entrepreneurs needed to embrace those factors for enhanced firm performance. Other studies have established that stakeholder pressure and relationships influence the extent to which organizations attain their goals and objectives (Awan et al., 2017; Quan, et al., 2018; Wang & Sengupta, 2016).

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis was done through content analysis to derive meaning using NVivo software. Key themes picked included organizational effectiveness, leadership strategies, fostering positive interactions and relationships, work effectiveness, external environment, competition, learning and adopting new technologies, and meeting stakeholder needs. These themes agreed with the key variables of the study.

The study sought to determine the respondent's opinion on how organizational context affected the relationship between leadership process and organizational effectiveness. Respondents revealed that factors in the immediate external environment caused the firm not to be effective. TM7 alluded that "unfavourable government policies, stiff market competition, high operational costs were among factors negatively affecting firm effectiveness." Other constraining factors included third party and stakeholder ineffectiveness, slow processes, lack of cooperation among industry members, poor quality of services, and poor relationships. Besides, unwarranted costs through system failures at government agencies, storage charges, demurrages, and poor infrastructure caused firm ineffectiveness.

Respondents indicated that relationships forged with stakeholders include good working relationships, conforming with laid down procedures and compliance with standards. Respondent TM5 stated, "Staff training, acquiring trusted partner status such as Authorized Economic Operator (AEO), assigning staff to deal with key stakeholders, healthy competition, and cooperation with the KIFWA was practiced." Firms also keep abreast with new industry regulations.

Respondent TM6 said, "Effective relationships with stakeholders comprises maintaining good relationships with all parties engaged in freight forwarding processes." Respondents also revealed that an effective code of conduct held the capacity to guide the freight forwarding firms professionally. However, the existing code had been ineffective. For instance, pricing of freight forwarding services was not regulated and the roles of KIFWA were not clearly defined. Respondent TM1; however, noted that,

International Air Transport (IATA) code of conduct used in airfreight services is effective since IATA provides regular training on handling dangerous goods to its members. The organization also provides guidelines on ethical behaviour such as transparency, integrity and honesty, cordial relationships with stakeholders, fairness in competition, transparency, and integrity.

Respondents noted that the firm was seeking to learn and adopt new technologies and sustainable practices in the industry by adopting automated clearance systems, integrating their systems with

partners, and tracking systems for real-time updates. In addition, trucks have installed fuel-measuring gadgets in compliance with third party requirements for online monitoring of transactions. Other technologies include cloud emails, digital marketing, and use of Enterprise Resource Planning systems and digitization of services. Respondent TM4 and others opined that the existing regulatory framework was complicated, punitive, bureaucratic and restrictive, hence making compliance difficult. This affects firm effectiveness in service provision.

These results triangulated those of quantitative data analysis hence increasing the validity of findings. Quantitative results on organizational context showed that to a high extent the respondents agreed that external environment factors influenced the effectiveness of their firms. Additionally, correlation results indicated a moderate positive correlation between organizational context and effectiveness. At the same time, organizational context had a significant moderating effect on the relationship between leadership process and organizational effectiveness.

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

The objective of the study was to assess the moderating effect of organizational context on the relationship between leadership process and effectiveness of freight forwarding firms in Nairobi City County, Kenya. Descriptive results established that deployment of organizational context was emphasized in the firms to a high extent. Correlational results revealed that organizational context had a significant moderate positive correlation with effectiveness of the freight forwarding firms.

Coefficient results showed that leadership process was significant in predicting organizational effectiveness. In the regression analyses, a positive variation in organizational effectiveness was noted after introducing organizational context in the model. The study concluded that organizational context had a significant moderating effect on the relationship between leadership process and effectiveness of freight forwarding firms in Nairobi City County.

The implication of the findings is that freight forwarding firms should seek to maintain close relationships with all stakeholders. This is attributed to the interconnected nature of supply chain systems, which calls for collaborative approaches at all fronts for effective service delivery. The findings support the postulates of the BSC model, Institutional Theory and Structuralism Theory since freight forwarding firms operate in controlled environments as they deploy varying approaches for goal attainment. The government and other actors regulate the environment, which acts as the source of shared notions of activities, practices, norms, and values in the industry. This diversity requires deployment of varying leadership strategies to deliver best outcomes (Ghazzawi et al., 2017; Velu et al., 2017).

Extracted dimensions namely, relationships with stakeholders, stakeholder needs and expectations, and competitive landscape must be considered for effectiveness by freight forwarding firms. Importantly, given the fragile nature associated with supply chain networks, management should focus on building capabilities that guarantee business continuity. The study recommends that other studies be undertaken in different contexts and businesses. Future studies should cover a longer period to observe the effect of age of the firms on their effectiveness.

The management is to develop and implement strategies to minimize the negative effect of the regulatory frameworks on firm effectiveness. To this end, freight forwarding firms should seek to strengthen KIFWA as a professional body, which will help in developing guidelines to regulate industry business conduct, provide information on service provision, and offer umbrella

protection. Government agencies should come up with policies that are not punitive to the operations of the sector.

The study findings provide a deeper understanding on the link between leadership process, organizational context and effectiveness. There is evidence that the findings can be generalized across the freight forwarding firms since similar results were obtained from previous studies in other sectors. Further, the dimensions of organizational effectiveness employed in this study have not been empirically tested in most past studies. Lastly, past empirical studies on leadership process and organizational outcomes were done outside Kenya and Africa, most of which did not give attention to effectiveness of freight forwarding firms.

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