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Abstract

This research aimed at establishing the influence of strategic alignment on medical employees' performance in county referral hospitals in CEREB, Kenya. Positivism paradigm was the guiding philosophy while convergent parallel mixed methods design was employed in the study. The target population comprised of 1804 medical employees from the 10-referral hospitals in central regional economic bloc, Kenya. Stratified sampling and simple random sampling from the probability sampling approach was used in getting 327 employees. This study used both closed-ended and open-ended questionnaires. Validity and reliability of the research instruments was tested using appropriate methods like piloting and expert knowledge for validity while Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was determined for reliability. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages, means and standard deviation. kurtosis, skewness and normality tests were carried out to ensure data was amenable to analysis. Results showed that strategic alignment had significant and positive effect on medical employees' performance in county referral hospitals. Results also revealed that innovative work behaviour significantly mediated the relationship between strategic alignment and medical employees' performance in county referral hospitals. This underscores the importance of aligning organizational strategies with employee roles while fostering a culture of innovation to amplify performance outcomes. To capitalize on these insights, hospital management should prioritize initiatives that promote creativity and innovation, such as providing targeted training, establishing reward systems for innovative contributions, and fostering supportive leadership.

Keywords: *Innovative Work Behaviour, Strategic Alignment, Medical Employees' Performance County, Referral Hospitals.*

1.0 Introduction

Employee performance is regarded as backbone of a firm because it effectively contributes towards its development and overall performance. Human resource plays a critical role in achieving firms' objectives. Employees are firm assets responsible for completing the organization's tasks, and the performance of such personnel is comparable to the organization's performance (López-Cabarcos et al., 2022). During COVID-19 pandemic, the performance of employees in the health sector especially nurses and doctors who were leading professions was faced with a lot of challenges (Yulianti, 2021). Provision of quality health care depends on task performance of medical employees who are valuable assets in maintaining hospital's reputation and overall performance (Labrague & De los Santos, 2021).

However, the accomplishment of medical employee's task highly depends on the kind of strategic alignment available in maintaining quality of hospital services among other factors like availability of funds. Recently, there has been a global health challenge and if a hospital has to survive in increasingly health care competition, they will require leaders with ability, expertise, strategy, and skills that improves performance of medical employees (Asbari, 2020). Thus, to attain and improve performance of medical employees, it is paramount for management to consider strategic alignment (Madlabana, 2020). Strategic alignment entails achieving strategic priorities through attaining a degree of harmony and compatibility among several elements in the organizational (Ghonim et al., 2020). In the center of strategic management literature, strategic alignment is integrating and synchronizing organizations drivers (including employees as asset of the firms) of attaining goals and objectives in responding to external and internal environmental pressures and improving organizational performance (Chi et al., 2020)..

Further, Strategic alignment has turned into the dominant discussion globally in strategic management, making it one of the most effective instruments for enhancing employees' performance (Peterlin et al., 2015). A Strategic leader is tasked with making vital decisions of facilitating information sharing and resource utilization towards improving performance of employees in attainment of organizational goals and objectives (Simsek et al., 2018). Strategic alignment practices are critical for enhancing organization competitiveness and survival ensuring that employees optimally utilize the existing resources towards achieving its mission and goals. In support, Sibghatullah and Raza (2020) and Pitelis and Wagner (2019) pointed that strategic alignment improves the ability of employee to be innovating with new ideas and adaptive to sudden changes. Thus, strategic a leader has ability to lead well and is essential in navigating and resolving crisis situations within a company such as the Covid 19 Pandemic experienced worldwide. Indeed, strategic leaders analyze and understand disruption and uncertainty in the business environment and rationally and proactively respond to them (Collier & Evans, 2020; Obeidat & Thani, 2020; Sayed & Theeb, 2019)

Nevertheless, despite the importance of Strategic alignment in improving employee performance, there has been scarce literature on concept of strategic leadership in a hospital setting. Leadership failure rates in meeting health-care goals are reported to be high. Many hospitals fail in meeting the target and attaining their mission due to mismanagement and lack of competence and knowledge of strategic leadership skills (Drew & Pandit, 2020) among other factors like lack of funds. In order to ascertain how strategic leadership affects the performance of medical personnel in county referral hospitals in the central economic bloc, this study was conducted.

In addition, innovative work behavior (IWB) has emerged as a critical factor for organizational sustainability and resilience, acting as a potential mediator in the relationship between strategic alignment and employee performance. IWB enables employees to generate and implement

innovative ideas, which are essential for navigating periods of rapid organizational change and maintaining competitive advantage (Kim, 2022). Strategic alignment fosters an organizational environment that supports creativity by aligning goals, resources, and processes, thereby creating a foundation for innovative behaviors to thrive (Alheet et al., 2021). Consequently, IWB may bridge the gap between strategic alignment and employee performance by transforming aligned strategies into actionable and impactful outcomes.

Moreover, organizational success increasingly depends on the innovative contributions of all employees, not just those in leadership or specialized roles, as creativity becomes a universal expectation in work behavior (Negassi et al., 2019). For strategic alignment to be fully realized, the organizational environment must facilitate conditions that encourage IWB, such as a culture of open communication, risk-taking, and continuous learning. This connection suggests a hypothetical mediating effect where IWB translates strategic alignment into enhanced employee performance by fostering adaptability, problem-solving, and proactive behaviors. Understanding this mediating role could provide deeper insights into how organizations can leverage strategic alignment to achieve both individual and collective performance goals while ensuring long-term sustainability.

In Kenya, Medical employees' performance has garnered global attention, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic, as they play a critical role in responding to emergencies, pandemics, and delivering quality health services. Their performance directly impacts the achievement of organizational goals, making it essential to identify determinants that enhance service quality (Darmayanti & Bahauddin, 2021). However, in the Central Region Economic Bloc (CEREB) of Kenya, many referral hospitals face low performance among medical employees, with around 40% expressing job dissatisfaction and low morale (Mandago & Anusu, 2022). Challenges such as inadequate leadership, infrastructure, resources, and motivation have been identified as contributing factors (Bwire, 2018; Kenya Medical Practitioners and Dentists Council, 2019; Kaguthi et al., 2020). These issues often stem from ineffective leadership and poor strategy implementation, yet the specific influence of strategic leadership on employee performance in these hospitals remains underexplored.

While previous studies have examined the role of strategic alignment in various sectors, including education, revenue authorities, and telecommunications (Anamanjia & Maina, 2022; Mulago & Oloko, 2019; Sang et al., 2018), their findings do not directly address the link between strategic alignment and medical employee performance in hospitals. Strategic leaders are vital for allocating resources, fostering communication, and enhancing adaptability (Akeke, 2016; Gupta, 2018), yet the application of strategic alignment and agility in the healthcare sector remains understudied. This research seeks to fill the gap by evaluating how strategic alignment influences medical employees' performance in CEREB referral hospitals. Understanding this relationship is crucial for improving healthcare delivery and overall organizational effectiveness (Conner & Joyce, 2019; Carter & Greer, 2013; Bansal & Desjardine, 2014).

2. Theoretical review

The contingency theory of leadership, also known as "A Contingency Model of Leadership Effectiveness," was created by Fred Edward Fiedler (1964) and posits the efficiency of a leader. According to this theory, strategy is a contingent component that must be fit into its context, both internal and external in order to improve employee performance (Shala et al., 2021). The alignment of company characteristics to contingencies which depict the institution's circumstances, according to contingency theory, results in performance improvement (Cyfert, 2021). This point of view asserts that firms seek to improve the alignment and fit of the current set of situational variables

with altering their external surroundings. In hectic workplaces, this fit technique is seen as a dynamic, continual activity (Mahmud et al., 2021).

Contingency Theory of leadership practice believes that there is no universal organizational system that can fit every organization. Rather, the circumstances will decide the most effective leadership style (Suharyanto & Lestari, 2020). The contingency theory in strategic management is where the concept of strategic alignment comes in as fundamental idea that the balance between personnel performance and strategic alignment has a substantial impact. This context can be found in the organization's external as well as internal environments (Abedalstar, 2022). As a result, by integrating synergies in strategy such as processes, organizational resources, and technical skills, institutions, whether private and public, function in a certain environment. Additionally, corporate strategy should indeed be interwoven with the goals, missions and plans of an organization (Chi et al., 2020). McClements and Young (2019) argue that strategic alignment is a contingency strategy that is dynamic throughout time. The importance of the contingency theory of leadership to this study lies in its association with the influence of strategic alignment on employees' performance. Amidst ongoing uncertainties and constant changes, strategic alignment becomes crucial for adapting to environmental shifts and uncertainties (Price, 2016). The study's alignment tactics, intertwined with organizational characteristics, hold the potential to significantly impact employees' performance, rendering the contingency theory highly relevant (Luftman, 2014).

3. Empirical Review (Hypotheses Development)

Strategic alignment has been extensively studied as a critical driver of organizational success and performance across various contexts. Alsayah (2022) highlighted that strategic alignment with internal and external variables significantly impacts a company's reputation and image, with organizations maintaining excellent images often showing robust strategic alignment. Locally, Anamanjia and Maina (2022) examined the Kenya Revenue Authority's performance, linking it to resource, business environment, structural, and cultural alignment. Their findings underscored the positive and significant influence of strategic alignment on performance. Similarly, Jaafar and Ahmed (2021) found that greater corporate strategy alignment in Iraq's Ministry of Health improved strategic decisions, supported by reliability and validity testing. Lees and Dhanpat (2021) further demonstrated that strategic alignment mediates the relationship between manager credibility and employee motivation, positively influencing organizational morale. These studies collectively reveal that strategic alignment plays a critical role in aligning organizational goals with performance outcomes.

Additionally, research has explored the impact of strategic alignment on specific industries and organizational functions. In South Africa, Gasela (2021) found that misalignment between corporate and business-level plans adversely affected public organizations' performance due to insufficient capacity and communication. In Egypt, Ghonim et al. (2020) identified that decision-making efficacy was significantly enhanced by strategic alignment. Pashutan et al. (2022) noted that IT-SMEs' performance in Yemen was positively influenced by strategic alignment, particularly under high IT management. Locally, Mulago and Oloko (2019) established that employee, process, customer, and IT alignment were key to the performance of Kenya's telecommunication sector, while Sang et al. (2018) observed that strategic alignment of organizational culture positively influenced NGO performance in Nakuru. These findings affirm the hypothesis. Thus, the study hypothesized that;

H₁: strategic alignment has significant effect on medical employees' performance

Innovative Work Behavior (IWB) is a critical driver of organizational innovation, defined as employees' ability to generate, produce, and implement new and useful ideas in their work environment. According to various studies, IWB is a multifaceted construct involving activities like idea generation, realization, opportunity exploration, and advancement. Messmann and Mulder's (2012) four-stage model of IWB—comprising opportunity exploration, idea generation, idea advancement, and idea realization—provides a framework for understanding this process. Opportunity exploration focuses on identifying and interpreting workplace issues requiring innovation, forming the foundation for subsequent stages like developing new ideas (idea generation), obtaining support for ideas (idea advancement), and integrating them into workplace practices (idea realization). The model emphasizes the multidimensional nature of IWB, essential for individual and organizational innovation, and highlights its relevance in addressing challenges creatively and driving solutions (Gerken et al., 2016; Middleton & Hall, 2021). Research underscores the significance of IWB in fostering organizational resilience, competitiveness, and sustainability, as employees' innovative behaviors and creativity are pivotal to adapting in dynamic business environments and achieving success (Pham et al., 2020; Kim, 2022).

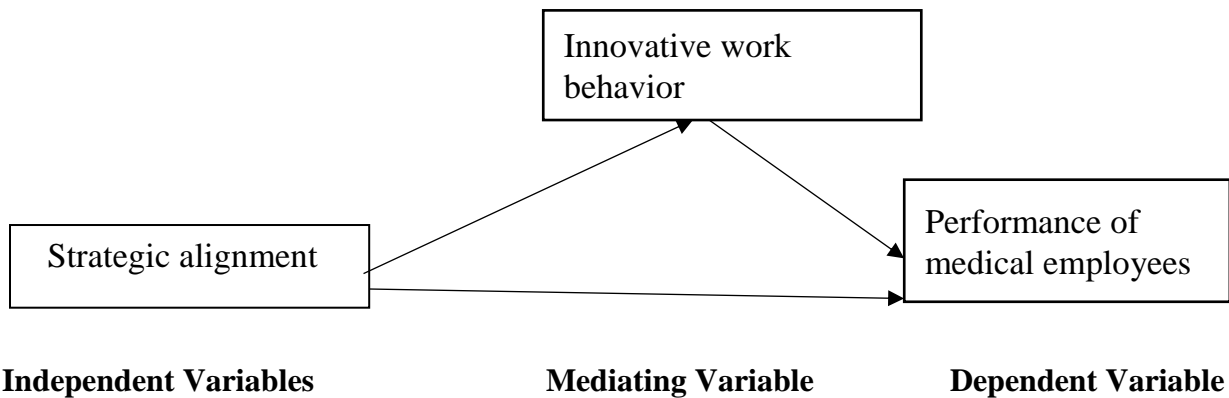
The mediating role of IWB has also been studied in various organizational contexts. For example, PT Gapura et al. (2023) investigated the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance, revealing that IWB significantly mediated this link. Using quantitative methods like surveys and structural equation modeling, the study demonstrated that IWB enhances the positive effects of leadership styles on performance. Other studies affirm the role of IWB as a vital resource in improving organizational outcomes, including increased problem-solving efficacy, employee motivation, and sustainability. IWB's multidimensionality allows organizations to harness employee creativity, promoting innovation at individual and group levels, which is critical for navigating rapid organizational changes and maintaining competitive advantage (Montani et al., 2020; Suwanti & Udin, 2020). Thus, the study hypothesized that:

H2: innovative work behaviour does significantly mediating relationship between strategic alignment and medical employees' performance

4. Conceptual Framework

Based on the theoretical framework and previous studies the following conceptual framework was developed. In conceptual framework (fig 1) the independent variable is strategic alignment graphically linked with study dependent variable (performance of medical employees). The mediating impact of innovative work behavior on the connection between strategic alignment and medical staff performance is also taken into account.

Figure 1: *Conceptual framework*



5. Methodology

This study mostly adhered to the positivist paradigm (Creswell, 2014). The study concentrated on the issues and theories presented in previous sections, and used an explanatory design in order to make a contribution to realistic solutions and results in the field of strategic management. Specific contributions were made from the evaluation of the conditional impact of strategic alignment on medical employees' outcome in county referral hospitals in central region economic bloc, Kenya, mediated by innovative work behaviour.

Sampling

The study employed a combination of probability sampling techniques, including stratified sampling and simple random sampling, to ensure a representative sample of 327 respondents from a target population of 1,804, determined using Slovin's formula at a 95% confidence level. Stratified sampling was utilized to account for the heterogeneity of the target population, dividing it into distinct strata based on areas of specialty, mandates, and job categories such as doctors, nurses, administrative staff, and technicians. This approach ensured that all subgroups were represented and prevented the omission of key sample components. Within each stratum, simple random sampling was applied to select respondents, guaranteeing that every individual had an equal chance of being chosen and minimizing systematic bias. This multi-stage approach enhanced the study's representativeness and reliability.

Data Collection Methods

The study employed both closed-ended and open-ended data collection tools, with structured questionnaires featuring Likert scales used to gather quantitative data from medical staff. Questionnaires were chosen for their efficiency in collecting large amounts of data systematically and without researcher bias, while Likert scales facilitated the conversion of qualitative perceptions into measurable values. Prior to the main study, a pilot study was conducted with 33 respondents from Machakos County referral hospitals to evaluate the validity and reliability of the research instruments, resulting in adjustments to enhance clarity and accuracy. Validity, encompassing criterion, face, content, and construct validity, was assessed to ensure the credibility and relevance of the tools, with face validity verified through expert reviews. Reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha coefficients, with all variables exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.7, demonstrating strong internal consistency. High reliability was observed across key constructs, including employee performance, strategic leadership dimensions, and innovative work behavior, reinforcing the robustness and dependability of the study's findings.

Data Processing, Analysis and Presentation

Before entering the collected data into the SPSS statistical software, it was cleaned, coded, and prepared using an Excel datasheet. The initial data processing involved cleaning, editing, and coding to ensure accuracy. Descriptive statistics, including means, frequencies, percentages, and standard deviations, were examined. A correlation matrix was constructed to assess potential multicollinearity issues among variables (Okwonu et al., 2020). Regression analysis, specifically multiple regression and Hayes' Model 4, was employed to evaluate model fit and examine both direct and mediation effects. This approach enabled a systematic assessment of each predictor variable's contribution to the model's predictive accuracy as additional variables were incorporated (Field, 2009).

6. Results

The results are presented in this section. This study analyzed data collected from 313 out of 327 distributed questionnaires to various medical staff categories, yielding a 95.71% response rate. After data cleaning, 44 questionnaires were excluded—34 due to missing values exceeding 50% and 10 due to multivariate outliers identified using Mahalanobis D² with a significance threshold of $p < 0.001$. This left 269 usable responses, representing 82.26% of the distributed questionnaires. The high response rate was achieved through diligent follow-ups, personal reminders, and a flexible "drop and pick later" option. Response rates above 70% are considered very good, aligning with standards set by Mugenda and Mugenda (2013) and Cooper and Schindler (2014). Data preparation adhered to best practices, including mean substitution for missing values below 50% as recommended by Pallant (2011) and thorough outlier screening per Tabachnick and Fidell (2018). These measures ensured the integrity and robustness of the dataset for analysis, comparable to previous studies like Ngeny’s (2014).

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 highlights key measures of employee performance, showing high productivity (mean = 3.87, SD = 0.93), commendable service delivery (mean = 4.09, SD = 0.82), and minimal accidents due to negligence (mean = 4.03, SD = 1.01). Employee recognition through awards (mean = 3.75, SD = 1.16) and acknowledgment (mean = 3.78, SD = 1.13) was notable, while patient satisfaction with service quality was high (mean = 4.03, SD = 0.80). Employees consistently provided personalized care (mean = 4.05, SD = 0.79), demonstrated a willingness to serve (mean = 4.18, SD = 0.71), and offered attentive service (mean = 4.03, SD = 0.86). Low standard deviations across metrics indicate consistent performance, with medical professionals in county referral hospitals within Kenya’s central region economic bloc exhibiting commendable overall performance (mean = 3.95, SD = 0.63). These results align with Lyubykh et al. (2022), who identified contextual, task, and adaptive dimensions as key aspects of employee performance.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for Employee Performance

	Mean	Std. Dev
The hospital has high employee productivity	3.87	0.93
The hospital has low turnover of medical employees	3.64	1.17
Medical employee service delivery is recommendable	4.09	0.82
Accidents resulting from employees’ negligence	4.03	1.01
Most of medical employees have received award for their work	3.75	1.16
Most of medical employees have received recognition for their work	3.78	1.13
There has been increase in patient satisfaction with quality of service offered.	4.03	0.80
Hospital employees give personalized care to patients	4.05	0.79
Hospital employees are willing to serve patients	4.18	0.71
Medical employees give personal attention to patients	4.03	0.86
Employee performance	3.95	0.63

Table 2 present descriptive results for strategic alignment. The findings revealed that hospital leadership has made significant strides in fostering inter-departmental collaboration (mean = 3.94, SD = 0.82) and promoting communication (mean = 4.08, SD = 0.83), though there is room for improvement to ensure consistency across departments. Efforts to align operations and integrate IT with hospital functions were positively perceived (mean = 4.10, SD = 0.82; mean = 4.06, SD = 0.90), as were leadership initiatives to communicate long-term objectives and organizational priorities (mean = 4.10, SD = 0.87; mean = 4.23, SD = 0.79). Additionally, hospital leadership was commended for fostering continuous learning, resource collaboration, and seeking employee input

(mean = 4.07, SD = 0.82; mean = 4.08, SD = 0.96; mean = 3.93, SD = 0.92). Most respondents (78.4%) affirmed strong employee alignment with organizational goals, mission, and vision, reflecting a positive organizational culture that enhances job satisfaction and productivity. However, a minority (21.6%) expressed misalignment, highlighting the need for strategies such as transparent communication and employee engagement. Operational alignment efforts were also evident, as hospitals aimed to synchronize departmental and individual strategies with overarching objectives, fostering coherence and synergy across organizational activities. These findings underscore the importance of strategic alignment, collaboration, and communication in driving organizational performance and employee satisfaction.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics for Strategic Alignment

	Mean	Std. Dev
The leadership of the hospital facilitates linkages between different business units or departments, promoting seamless cooperation and collaboration among employees	3.94	0.82
The hospital leadership ensures there are no collaboration barriers between departments.	4.08	0.83
The hospital leadership strives to continuously align operational functions in all departments	4.1	0.82
The hospital leadership have effectively aligned IT with operation functions in all departments	4.06	0.9
All employees of the hospital are properly informed of the healthcare facility's long-term goals by leadership.	4.1	0.87
The leadership of the medical facility ensures that staff members are well aware of the institution's most important goals.	4.23	0.79
The hospital leadership hold regular meetings with employee from all department to assess if the IT project is aligned to the business objectives.	3.93	0.97
The hospital leadership encourages and develops employees to work as a team.	4.04	0.81
The leadership of the medical facility makes care to offer a wide range of amenities without compromising service quality	3.96	0.86
The leadership of the healthcare facility directs all of its operations ...	4.22	3.22
The leadership of the healthcare facility directs all of its operations to cater to the demands of the patients.	3.93	0.92
The hospital leadership has appointed a cross departmental committee in ensuring there is resources collaboration among all departments in executing a specific project	4.08	0.96
Strategic Alignment	4.06	0.71

Table 3 highlights that medical employees in county referral hospitals exhibited high levels of innovative work behavior (overall mean = 4.4, SD = 0.57), consistently seeking opportunities to enhance their work environment (mean = 4.44, SD = 0.78) and exploring new methods, tools, and techniques (mean = 4.46, SD = 0.75). They demonstrated confidence in their ability to create positive organizational impacts (mean = 4.55, SD = 0.62), addressed non-routine concerns proactively (mean = 4.42, SD = 0.80), and actively promoted and integrated innovative ideas (mean = 4.42, SD = 0.79). Employees perceived top management as supportive of innovation (mean = 4.36, SD = 0.93) but noted that innovation was often overshadowed by urgent issues in government hospitals (mean = 4.16, SD = 0.95). While they believed their innovative efforts had limited influence on overarching policies (mean = 4.29, SD = 0.90), they strongly supported implementing reward systems for innovation to address local medical challenges (mean = 4.62, SD = 0.67). These findings align with prior research emphasizing the importance of leadership support, a conducive work environment, and recognition systems in fostering innovation among healthcare professionals.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics Innovative Work Behavior

	Mean	Std. Dev
I search for ways to advance technology, business operations, business processes, and working connections.	4.44	0.78
I see possibilities to positively impact my job, organization as well, department, and clients.	4.55	0.62
I focus on unusual circumstances challenges at work, in my divisions, and at this institution.	4.42	0.80
I look for innovative instruments, approaches, and working ways.	4.46	0.75
I believe I am excellent at coming up with innovative ways to do my work.	4.40	0.76
I urge important organization employees to embrace novel concepts with enthusiasm.	4.45	0.78
I make an effort to persuade people to encourage creative ideas	4.40	0.78
I consistently incorporate new concepts into my work.	4.42	0.79
The top management of the hospital are very keen in rewarding and encouraging innovation which has helped the hospital to grow.	4.36	0.93
Whether we innovate or not, instructions and working code of ethics is always set at the ministry headquarters by policy makers and ours is to follow them.	4.29	0.90
Given a chance, I would strongly encourage an elaborate reward system for innovations at the grassroots to encourage research into practical solutions to local medical problems in the county.	4.62	0.67
IWB	4.41	0.57

Correlation Analysis

The findings presented in Table 4 demonstrate significant and positive associations among the variables under study. A strong positive correlation was observed between strategic alignment and employee performance ($r = .687, p < 0.001$), indicating that aligning organizational strategies with staff roles significantly enhances performance outcomes. Additionally, a moderate positive relationship was found between innovative work behavior (IWB) and employee performance ($r = .403, p < 0.001$), suggesting that fostering innovation among employees contributes to improved performance, albeit to a lesser extent than strategic alignment. Overall, the results highlight that both strategic alignment and innovative work behavior are positively and significantly associated with the performance of medical employees in referral hospitals within the CEREB region.

Table 4 Correlation Analysis

		EP	SAL	IWB
Employee Performance (EP)	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
Strategic Alignment (SAL)	Pearson Correlation	.687**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		
Innovative Work Behavior (IWB)	Pearson Correlation	.403**	.481**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	

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

Hypotheses Testing (Hayes Model 4)

Regression analysis was used to evaluate model fit and find out how well the models could predict the response variable. Although there are a number of regression techniques available, such as stepwise, hierarchical, and forced entry methods (Field, 2009) multiple regression and Hayes model 4 were used in this work to investigate the direct and mediation effects (hypotheses 5). The researcher can methodically assess each independent variable's contribution to the predictive ability of the model by using this method, which accurately demonstrates the impact on the model used for regression as different predictor variables are incorporated. This section presents the findings for the factors' main influence and final interaction effects. The Hayes model 4 results, as seen in table 4.43, are listed below.

The findings in Table 4 reveal an R^2 value of 0.479, signifying that strategic alignment and innovative work behavior accounted for about 47.9% of the variance in employee performance (R square = 0.479). Further, strategic alignment had a positive and significant influence on employee performance ($\beta=.607$, $p<0.05$). Thus, the H_{03} that there was no significant influence of strategic alignment on medical employees' performance in county referral hospitals in central region economic bloc, Kenya was rejected. The implication was that a one unit increase in strategic alignment was associated with a 0.607 unit increase in employee performance, all other independent variables and factors held constant. Consistent with the results, Lees and Dhanpat (2021) showed that strategic alignment enhanced employee motivation, with the latter being influenced by both manager credibility and strategic alignment. The implication was that employees tended to be more highly motivated when they perceived that their managers had a clear, coherent vision and that their efforts contributed to the broader organizational objectives. This suggests that strategic alignment not only enhanced employee motivation but also optimized the decision-making abilities of the organization, thus promoting more informed, timely, and effective decisions within the organization. The findings were also aligned with the assertions by Ghonim et al. (2020) that decision-making efficacy was significantly affected by strategic alignment aspects, suggesting that strategic alignment could optimize decision effectiveness. Extant literature has also shown that strategic alignment contributes to an improvement in organizational performance (Anamanjia & Maina 2022; Pashutan et al., 2022; Mulago & Oloko, 2019; Sang et al., 2018). This implied that strategic alignment played a significant role in not only enhancing employee performance but also decision-making efficacy, and overall organizational effectiveness.

Hayes model 4 results on Mediating influence of innovative work behaviour on the Relationship between Strategic Alignment and Employee Performance are presented in Table 4.45 The results from Hayes Model 4, as presented in Table 4.45, reveal a significant positive relationship between strategic alignment (SAL) and employee performance (EP) ($\beta = 0.620$, $p=0.000<0.05$). This finding highlights the importance of strategic alignment in driving employee performance within organizations, aligning with previous research emphasizing the role of alignment between organizational goals and employee actions (Anom & Gustomo, 2023). Strategic alignment ensures that employees' efforts are directed towards achieving organizational objectives, thereby enhancing overall performance and productivity.

Additionally, the coefficient for innovative work behavior (IWB) in Table 4.45 is 0.111, with a corresponding p-value of 0.042, indicating a significant influence of IWB on employee performance. This finding underscores the critical role of innovative work behavior in contributing to employee performance, consistent with previous literature highlighting the importance of creativity and innovation in organizational success (Kim, 2022; Alheet et al., 2021; Negassi et al., 2019). Innovative work behavior enables employees to adapt to changing environments, identify

new opportunities, and drive organizational growth through creative problem-solving and idea generation.

Furthermore, the mediation analysis reveals a statistically significant indirect influence of strategic alignment on employee performance via IWB, suggesting partial mediation (Effect = 0.0432, BootSE = 0.0259, BootLLCI = 0.0003, BootULCI = 0.1017). Although IWB partially mediates the relationship, strategic alignment still significantly influences employee performance even after accounting for this mediation effect. This indicates the presence of additional pathways or factors through which strategic alignment directly influences employee performance beyond innovative work behavior. These findings underscore the multidimensional nature of organizational performance drivers and highlight the importance of considering both strategic alignment and innovative work behavior in fostering employee performance and organizational success.

Table 4 Mediation influence of Innovative Work Behaviour on the Relationship between Strategic Alignment and Employee Performance

	Model 1 (IWB)			Model 2 (EP)		
	B	se	P	β	se	p
Constant	2.856	0.175	0.000	1.024	0.240	.000
SAlign	$a_1=0.388$	0.043	0.000	$C'=.607$	0.048	.000
IWB				$b_I=0.111$	0.059	.042
R-sq	.232			.479		
F	80.462			122.076		
F prob	.000			.000		
Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:						
	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI		
Mediation						
(a1×b1)	0.0432	0.0259	0.0003	0.1017		

Note: Sign. * $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$, SAL=Strategic Alignment, IWB= Innovative work behaviour, EP= employee performance.

7. Conclusions

In conclusion, strategic alignment emerges as a key determinant in enhancing employee performance within hospital settings, particularly evident in county referral hospitals in the central region of Kenya. The findings underscore the pivotal role of strategic alignment in driving medical employees' performance, emphasizing the importance of aligning hospital operations with overarching organizational goals and objectives. Leadership practices within these hospitals have effectively promoted collaboration, communication, and integration of information technology (IT) across departments, fostering a culture of continuous learning and improvement. However, despite these positive strides, variations in employee experiences highlight the need for ongoing efforts to strengthen leadership practices and ensure consistency in employee satisfaction and engagement. Moving forward, investments in leadership development programs, coupled with initiatives to enhance strategic alignment and foster a culture of open communication and recognition, are imperative for optimizing employee performance and delivering quality healthcare services to the community. By aligning strategic initiatives with organizational objectives, hospitals can navigate the complexities of the healthcare environment more effectively, ultimately enhancing patient outcomes and stakeholder satisfaction

8. Recommendations

It is also recommended that hospitals in the central region of Kenya continue to invest in leadership development programs aimed at strengthening collaboration, communication, and alignment across departments. Providing additional training and resources to hospital leaders can further empower them to effectively lead their teams and navigate the complexities of the healthcare environment. Addressing variations in employee experiences should also be prioritized, with hospitals conducting regular assessments to identify areas for improvement and implementing targeted initiatives to enhance employee satisfaction and engagement. Fostering a culture of open communication, feedback, and recognition can contribute to a more positive work environment for all employees. Furthermore, hospitals should prioritize efforts to enhance strategic alignment with organizational goals and objectives, thereby optimizing performance and better meeting the needs of their patients and stakeholders. Finally, the government should consider creating guidelines and frameworks that encourage the engagement of stakeholders, foster a culture of innovation among medical employees, and emphasize continuous improvement in employee performance. Additionally, policies should ensure easy access to strategic plans, enable the allocation of resources effectively, and establish regular evaluation and monitoring protocols for strategic plans implementation.

Further Research

The research primary objective was to establish strategic alignment influence on medical employees' performance in county referral hospitals in the central region economic bloc, Kenya.

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