THE MEDIATING ROLE OF SUCCESSION PLANNING ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF KENYA AIRWAYS

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my authentic work and has not been submitted in any other University.

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This thesis has been submitted for the study with our approval as University Supervisors.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis, first, to the Almighty God for His unfailing grace that has remained sufficient to me this far. Secondly, I dedicate it to my dear husband, my children, together with my dad and my late mum, who remained my greatest supporters and cheerleaders through this quite involving academic life. Your great motivation has been my inspiration and strength. May God bless you so abundantly, thank you!

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Abstract

In the dynamic business landscape of the 21st century, various industries, including the aviation sector, have undergone significant transformations due to technological advancements, intensified competition, and the unprecedented impact of events like the COVID-19 pandemic. Within this context, this research paper focused on the aviation sector, with the main objective of investigating the mediating role of succession planning in the relationship between strategic leadership and the performance of Kenya Airways. Specifically, this paper sought to examine the effects of strategic direction, resource utilization, organizational culture, and ethical practices on the performance of Kenya Airways. The research was grounded on The Resource-Based View (RBV) theory serving as the primary theoretical framework, complemented by Strategic Leadership theory, Upper Echelon theory, and Path-Goal Leadership theory. Adopting a pragmatic philosophical worldview, the study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-method research design. The target population consisted of Kenya Airways' top and middle management team, with a sample size of 88 participants determined through proportional stratified sampling and purposive sampling techniques. Primary data was collected through a semi-structured questionnaire and open-ended interviews, while secondary data was obtained from existing published financial reports of Kenya Airways spanning from 2013 to 2021. Confidentiality of the participants was strictly maintained, ensuring that the collected data was solely used for the purposes of this study only. Thematic analysis was the criteria adopted to analyze qualitative data. Descriptive and inferential statistics were generated for quantitative data with the aid of SPSS Version 25 software. The data underwent several diagnostic tests to ensure its suitability for analysis. The tests confirmed that the assumptions of linearity, multicollinearity, and normality were met, confirming the data's suitability for analysis. Regression analysis results revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between strategic direction and organizational performance (p-value = 0.042), resource utilization and organizational performance (p-value = 0.002), organizational culture and organizational performance (p-value = 0.033), and ethical practices and organizational performance (p-value = 0.049). The four-step approach for testing mediating effect established that succession planning played a partial mediating role in the relationship between strategic leadership and organizational performance of Kenya Airways (p = 0.001).The study recommends that the CEO of Kenya airways should enhance succession planning for long-term success of the airline’s performance.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AFRAA	African Airline Association
CEO:	Chief Executives Officers
CSR:	corporate social responsibilities
GIAA:	Garuda Indonesia
IATA:	International Air Transport Association
ICT:	Information Communications Technology
KCAA:	Kenya Civil Aviation Authority
NACOSTI:	National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
RBV:	Resource-Based View theory
ROA:	Return on Assets
ROE:	Return to Equity
SAP:	Sustainability Accounting Practices
SME:	Small and Medium Enterprises
SPSS:	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UAE:	United Arab Emirates
USA:	United States of America

Operational Definition of Terms

Organisational Performance:	Al-Qudah et, al (2020) described organizational performance as the capacity to maintain profitability, secure long-term market share, as well as its competitiveness in comparison with other organizations. In this study, organizational performance is viewed as the level at which an organization realizes its set goals overtime.
Organizational culture	Is the distinguishing aspect of a firm's beliefs, values, styles of work, as well as relationships that distinguishes one organization from another (Leithy ,2017). In this study Organizational culture is considered as what defines an organization
Strategic Direction	Mansour et al., (2020) views strategic direction as the act of developing strategic vision that is long-term and one that defines the organization's strategic intent .In this study ,the term is considered as the ability to convert a strategy into a vision and effectively communicate it to the employees
Strategic Leadership	Is the capability to scan the organizational environment, plan deliberately, articulate vision, make decisions and manage organizational change (Wart,2011);in this study Strategic leadership is considered as a position occupied by those in top positions who are mandated with the responsibility to develop and implement well thought plans for long-term enhancement of an organisation

Succession Planning	Colarusso & Lyle (2014) describes it as a systematic attempt that allows continuity of top leadership through development activities that cultivate the mid-career leaders. The term is used in the current study to imply the process of identifying and developing leaders as a replacement for current management

Chapter One: Introduction and Background of The Study

The performance of the aviation sector has faced some turbulent time in a business world that is quite volatile and uncertain, nonetheless, the importance of this sector in promoting the economic growth of the nations is key hence the need to ensure its sustainability. Strategic leadership as the independent variable in this study, is considered as a position occupied by those in top positions who are mandated with the responsibility to develop and implement well thought plans for long-term enhancement of an organization. Nonetheless, a time comes when these strategic leaders have to leave office, thus creating a gap that can possibly impact performance. This study, therefore, examines the mediating effect that succession planning would have on strategic leadership and the performance of Kenya Airways. This chapter presents a comprehensive explanation on the background of the study, describing the statement of the problem as well as the objective and hypothesis of the study. It further discusses the assumptions, justification, significance, scope, limitations and delimitations of the study. Finally, a summary of the chapter is provided.

Background of the Study

The business arena in the 21st Century has proven to be quite volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous, putting a lot of strain on organizations' performance (Bennett and Lemoine,2014, as quoted by Ungureanu *et al*.,2018). The aviation sector is probably one of the most dynamic sectors in the world, that contributes to the economic growth in many countries (Mukhezakule & Tefera, 2019, Abdi *et al*,.2021). Nonetheless, the sector has undergone a turbulent period emerging from changes in global regulations, a technological quantum leap, emergence of and competition from new low-cost airlines, high cost of jet fuel, unpredictability of the business environment, (Belobaba *et al*.,2015; Cullinane,2019) and the most recent, reduced certainty due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Amankwah-Amoah,2020). All these challenges have impacted on the performance of the aviation sector.

According to a report by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) following the trade tensions in 2019, between the United States of America (USA) and China, the aviation sector in the Middle East recorded a negative operating margin of -5.2% and a 4.6% drop in Cargo volume .A Similar impact was experienced by other airlines within the Asia-Pacific region who recorded a 5.6% drop in its cargo volume (IATA,2020).The sector has, therefore, not only experience negative margins on its passenger flights but also its cargo flights .

A research done by Prissia & Daryanto (2019) on the aviation sector in Indonesia, indicated that, the sector's performance had experienced a progressive decline between 2014 and 2018 .This was due to the weakening of the national currency against the US dollar and high navigation cost .Consequently, Garuda Indonesia (GIAA) the country's flag carrier recorded a Return to Equity (ROE) of -28% in 2018 against a minimum standard of 15%. ROE is used to express a company's profitability performance. This is an indication that the sector is also faced with high operating costs hence impacting on its overall profit margin.

In Africa, Mukhezakule & Tefera (2019) further observed that, the aviation sector has not only failed to achieve dominance of the market within the global market, but also faced leadership failure. According to a report published by the African Airline Association (AFRAA), some African airlines, whose financial situation before COVID-19, was already precarious were negatively impacted (AFRAA, 2021) as it was the case with South Africa Airways. The airline had registered increasing losses of R26.9 billion by 2019 (Nyatsumba & David ,2021) having lost millions of its customers to its competitors and failing to recover despite the bailouts, consequently the airline had to enter into a business rescue initiative sponsored by the government (Ward, 2021). According to Busungu (2020) the partnership between Air Tanzania limited and South African Airways collapsed just a few years after signing their partnership in 2002 due to losses that had accumulated in that period. A move that later saw the airline re-launched by the government in 2007 did little to help, as it collapsed again in 2015 due to losses from leasing of aircraft, lack of skilled personnel and bureaucracy (Lamtey, 2016, Rweyemamu, 2015, Sumila, 2015 as quoted by Busungu,2020). Another bail out was done by the government between 2016 and 2019 that saw the airline acquire 9 aircraft by 2019 (Busungu, 2020) before COVID struck the sector in early 2020.

In Kenya, the aviation sector has been performing poorly, putting the airlines on extraordinary pressure to either yield feasible as well as sustainable results or face closure (Berbanas *et al*.,2017 as quoted by Njoroge & Maina,2021). The National carrier, Kenya Airways which is the largest airline in the country, has not been spared either -the airline has recorded a downward trend in its performance since 2014 (Mungai & Bula, 2018). According to the carrier's annual financial reports, the airline recorded a net loss of Kshs 25.7 billion in 2015 (KQ annual report,2015) then Kshs 26.2 billion and Kshs 6.4 billion in 2016 and 2017 respectively. In the following years, Kenya airways published a net loss of Kshs 7.59 billion in 2018 and Kshs 12.9 billion in 2019 (KQ annual report,2019) before hitting a record high of Kshs 36.2 billion in 2020 (KQ annual report,2020) following the impact from COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequently the airline has had to depend on the government for support (Mungai & Bula, 2018; Nyatsumba & Pooe, 2022)

The aforementioned challenges faced by most airlines over the years, have not only impacted negatively on their performance but also underscore the need for effective leadership that will help the airlines to navigate through. Mukhezakule & Tefera (2019) further asserts that leadership plays a critical role in organizational sustainability. Ojogiwa (2021) argues that strategic leadership helps in shaping an organization's future through continuous environmental scanning, responding and adapting to emerging changes such as those faced by the aviation sector. Previous studies have further indicated that strategic leadership impacts on performance through the strategic decisions they make (Kim, 2020; Munawaroh *et al*., 2021; Ojogiwa, 2021).

A time comes when even the most efficient leader will have to leave the office. The gap left in case of a departure of a strategic leader, not only impacts the business sectors but also other industries like health, education as well as the government (Estedadi & Hamidi, 2015). To ensure continuity of business success even when the current strategic leaders are no longer there, Shatilwe & Amukugo (2016) recommend the implementation of a succession planning process through leadership development.

Succession planning helps in establishing organizational resilience as well as maintaining stability amid contingencies (VanVactor, 2015). According to Schepker *et al*., (2017) internal top leadership succession planning, improves a firm's long-term performance with less engagement on strategic change, while external direct hiring encourages additional strategic change that usually bring about lower performance in the long run. Succession planning, therefore, cannot be overlooked because it has a positive correlation with a firm's survival (Akani, 2015) and without it, it is planning to fail in achieving a firm's long-term strategy (Ballaro & Polk, 2017) Unfortunately, past research has revealed that most organizations have given little or no attention to succession planning.

Sukayri's (2016) study on the United Nations system revealed that succession planning is not a priority despite its great importance. Additionally, no formal succession planning is in existence within the system. Another research by Ballaro & Polk (2017) on the manufacturing companies in Arizona indicated that formal succession plan was lacking and there existed some notable discrepancies on the succession planning criteria. Mehrtak *et al*., (2017) carried out a research on the health ministry and medical education in Iran and established that, creation and standardization of succession planning in the two sectors was significantly affected by the existing organizational culture. Consequently, this deprived the sectors of numerous benefits from succession planning.

Another study done on the hotel industry in Nigeria by Obadan, & Ohiorenoya,(2013) revealed that, like many other countries, majority of the small companies, had no succession program in place. A similarly research done in Kenya by Onyango *et al*. (2014) on Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) concluded that a low of 39% of these NGOs had a documented succession planning and only 18% had identified potential successors. Succession planning has, therefore, not only been lacking but has also been suppressed with majority of the organizations failing to identify prospective successors.

Research has also revealed that succession planning directly affects employee performance which, by building on the quality performance of the human resources, can improve the organization's competitive advantage resulting to improved organizational performance (Amirkhani *et al*., 2016). In support of this view, Conțu (2020) correlated organizational performance with the performance of each individual member in the different teams within the organization. In other words, every individual's input contributes to the general performance of the organization, consequently, effective planning for succession is an important aspect of organizational performance.

Succession Planning

Succession planning is a deliberate plan by top leadership to identify potential leaders within the organization then mentor and share knowledge for continuity and talent retention (Saporito, & Winum,2012; Galbraith *et al*., 2012). It is a systematic attempt that allows continuity of top leadership through development activities that cultivate the mid-career leaders (Colarusso & Lyle,2014). Ritchie (2020) argues that succession planning gives the organization the opportunity to have a smooth transfer of leadership and authority from one individual to another while maintaining the organization's stability. This implies that leadership succession is fundamental to a firm's sustainable success. To support this, Saporito & Winum (2012) alluded that, history has indicated that the ultimate determinant of a firm's success or failure is not based on capital and assets, but rather the organization's individuals who lead, manage, govern, as well as deploy the available resources.

Scholars have employed different elements to measure the effectiveness of succession planning. For example, Akani (2015) used management development, mentoring and retention effort, while Ballaro & Polk (2017) used elements such as career-broadening programs, training, awards and tenure. On the other hand, Alaba (2020) used employee mentoring strategy and managerial development Strategy to measure succession planning.

Succession planning as a mediating variable in this study, has been used because it a deliberate approach which aims at ensuring continuity of the leadership, retention of talents thereby contributing to the success of an organization (Mazzei *et al*., 2016). Further, the study used four elements to measure this variable, which included talent retention, knowledge transfer, leadership development and leadership tenure.

Strategic Leadership

Strategic leadership is the ability to create a sense of purpose and direction as a guide towards formulating and implementing strategies in organizations (Hosmer, 1982 as quoted by Shrivastava & Nachman, 1989). It is the ability to scan the organizational environment, plan deliberately, articulate vision, make decisions and manage organizational change (Wart, 2011). It also o involves foreseeing the future, building consensus among the employees, ensuring effective distribution of resources and creating a conducive environment in order to achieve the desired goal (Al Thani & Obeidat ,2020)

This study has used strategic leadership to explain the ability of the top leadership to develop and implement well thought plans for long-term enhancement of an organization (Strand, 2014). This can be s realized when they develop strategic vision and clarify it to employees in order to achieve a desired strategic change and attain a sustainable competitiveness often achieved by mobilizing available resources towards the shared vision (Mansour *et al*., 2020). Several scholars (Al Thani & Obeidat (2020; Nyong'a & Maina ;2019; Mansour *et al*.,2020.) are in agreement that strategic leadership comprises the following: strategic competences, talents investment, human capital development, strategic orientation, reinforcement of organizational culture, ethical practices and balanced regulatory control.

In this study strategic leadership, which is the independent variable, is the critical role occupied by those in top management (Luciano *et al*., 2020) and that significantly shapes an organization's future (Ojogiwa, 2021). The study considered four elements of strategic leadership namely, strategic direction, resource utilization, organizational culture and finally, ethical practices. Strategic direction refers to act of creating a long-term strategic vision in line with the organization's strategic intent (Mansour *et al*., 2020) and entails providing clarity to all employees about the organization's mission and vision by making it clear to the employees on what the organization intends to accomplish, as well as setting the strategic goals, and developing a strategic plan (Al Thani & Obeidat, 2020).Strategic direction was measured using three elements, namely; vision articulation, shared goals and objectives, and strategy implementation.

Resource utilization enables a firm to deliver quality services to its customers and create competitive advantage by effectively and efficiently leveraging on its resources (Ahmad *et al*.,2020). These resources include both tangible and intangible resources, nevertheless, for them to attain competitive advantage, it is paramount that they be valuable, unique and difficult to duplicate (Nwachukwu & Chladkova, 2019). This study measured resource utilization effectiveness by focusing on the firm's ability to utilize its human as well as financial and physical resources.

Organizational culture can be defined as the personality of the organization (Onu *et al*., 2018). It indicates the organization's shared values, beliefs and assumptions that govern how a firm interacts with its internal as well as its external environment (Arokodare *et al*., 2019). In other words, organizational culture is what defines it. This study measured the effectiveness of organizational culture using three elements, namely: adaptability capability, shared values and organizational climate.

Ethical practices are precepts that guide the interaction between the employees and the organization ,as well as other related external parties (Mansour *et al*.,2020).It also involves the ability of the strategic leaders to care for the interest of others rather than personal interest, apply justice, show respect to all and take responsibility (Al Thani & Obeidat, 2020).In this study ethical practices was measured in relation to integrity ,transparency and the attention given to Stakeholders .

Organizational Performance

It is the wish of organizations to perform well and achieve their desired goals. Al-Qudah et. al. (2020) described organizational performance as the capacity to maintain profitability, long-term market share, as well as its competitiveness in comparison with other organizations. It is the level at which an organization realizes its set goals overtime. In other words, the bottom line of the results of a firm, compared to its projected results (Kim, 2020). The author further looked at organizational performance from two aspects, namely, the financial performance and non-financial performance. This implies that it's not sufficient to measure organizational performance in terms of the financial outcome only, but also consider other aspects that are not financial but contribute significantly to the overall performance. Most of the commonly used non-financial elements by researchers include employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction, community engagement, environmental remedy actions, quality of service among others (Amah & Oyetunde, 2019; Colbran *et al*., 2019; Conţu, 2020).

Organizational performance can be perceived as the efficiency and effectiveness of a firm. The effectiveness signifies the outcome of the relationship between resource utilization and the output, while effectiveness refers to the organization's capacity to achieve its goals (Nowy *et al*., 2015), by taking actions that improve the worthiness of the goods or services or even the business (Chowdhury *et al*., 2019). In their study, Colbran *et al*. (2019) noted that, there is no specific agreed ways of measuring performance and therefore the authors proposed a model of performance that measures performance by the quality of services offered, the organization's finance position, stakeholder's importance as well as the people and culture aspect. Organizational performance has further been measured in terms of its financial ratio, its market outcome, job satisfaction, organizational outcomes in relation to service quality and productivity (Singh *et al*., 2016). The authors further suggested a subjective approach in measuring performance which involves gathering information from the organization's managers or any other related crucial informants.

This study adopted the approach used by Kim (2020) and therefore measured organizational performance in relation to an organization's financial as well as non-financial performance. To achieve this, a Return on Assets (ROA) approach, a Return On Equity (ROE) approach as well as the market share approach was used to measure the financial performance while the non-financial performance was determined by customer satisfaction, employee loyalty and the service quality.

The context of this proposed study is the national carrier Kenya Airways, and the aim of the study is to understand the mediating role of succession planning on the relation between strategic leadership and the performances of Kenya Airways. The study used organizational performance as the dependent variable, strategic leadership as the independent variable and succession planning as the mediating variable.

Statement of the Problem

The aviation sector has undergone some turbulent times that have challenged its objective of supporting economic growth in many countries (Abdi *et al*., 2021; Tsiotas *et al*., 2020). After the recession in 2009, most airlines enjoyed a ten-year period of profit making between 2010 and 2019 (Krause, 2021). This, however, was not the case for most carriers in Africa, Latin America and Middle East. A report by AFRAA (2019) indicated that despite the increase on passenger figures in 2018 by 5.5% compared to 2017.These three regions posted net losses of US$0.1 billion, US$0.5 billion, and US$1.0 billion respectively in 2018. The report further indicated that the poor performance was attributed to the high fuel cost, lack of state funding in some countries, fluctuation of currencies and high charges and taxes within the African region compared to other regions.

Similarly, in its annual report for 2018, Kenya Airways published a net loss of Kshs 7.59 billion before tax, with the losses increasing significantly following the COVID-19 pandemic that resulted to reduced operations and grounding of several aircrafts (Annual report, 2020). Additionally, the senior leadership in Kenya Airways, which according to this study was represented by strategic leadership, had recorded a notable turnover of its Chief Executives Officers (CEOs) .The transition of leadership can be traced back to 2013 when one of the longest serving leaders, Titus Naikuni resigned from the position of CEO after serving for 11 years and was succeeded by Mbuvi Ngunze, (Nyatsumba & Pooe, 2022), who served the company for only two-and-a-half years before resigning from his position in 2017. Sebastian Mikosz replaced Ngunze as the CEO, but his tenure lasted two-and-a-half years only. Mikosz was then replaced by Allan Kivaluka in 2020. That means, for the past nine years, the company has had three CEOs, yet the company bottom line has been in the red since 2013 when the airline recorded a loss of Kshs7.86 billion (Annual report,2013).

The annual financial reports of Kenya Airways continued to reveal a series of net losses, for example,in 2015 the airline recorded a loss of Kshs 25.7 billion (KQ annual report, 2015), followed by Kshs 26.2 billion and Kshs 6.4 billion in 2016 and 2017, respectively. Despite the appointment of Michael Joseph as the chairman of the airline in October 2016, who had previously led Safaricom Limited to become a prominent telecommunications company with a 65.4 percent market share (Gachigo et al., 2019), Kenya Airways continued to experience financial losses. Even in 2018 and 2019, the airline reported net losses of Kshs 7.59 billion and Kshs 12.9 billion respectively (KQ annual report, 2019). Moreover, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a staggering net loss of Kshs 36.2 billion in 2020 (KQ annual report, 2020). Consequently, the airline has had to rely on government support (Mungai & Bula, 2018; Nyatsumba & Pooe, 2022) for it to stay afloat. This trend is quite alarming and a threat to the national economic growth, a problem that created the drive for this study.

Several scholars have conceptualized organizational performance as the overall output measured against the intended output (Al Khajeh, 2018; Kumar et al., 2016). Conţu (2020) on his part conceptualized organizational performance as the extent to which a firm uses its informational, financial as well as human resources to effectively position itself in the business market. These differences in conceptualizing organizational performance have created a research gap for further studies. This study addressed this gap by looking at the financial as well as well as the non-financial aspect, hence providing a holistic view on organizational performance. Additionally, majority of the previous research concentrated on Strategic leadership and organizational performance as the study variables (Onchieku &

Ragui, 2019; Amah & Oyetunde, 2019) very few managed to assess the combined effect with a mediating variable as is the case in this study.

Contextually, despite the numerous studies done on the link between strategic leadership and performance in different business sectors such as not-for-profit organization, government owned tourism organizations, Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's) (Kitonga et al., 2016; Ng'ang'a et al., 2016; Donkor et al., 2018) very little has been done on the aviation sector and particularly within the Kenyan context. Other related studies on the performance of Kenya Airways include, the impact of environmental factor on the airline's financial performance by Ochieng (2015), effects of supplier management and Kenya airways performance (Kosgei & Gitau, 2016) and the relationship between turnaround strategy and Kenya Airways performance (Mungai & Bula, 2018). Despite these and other numerous studies done on Kenya Airways performance, no single study had used the adopted variables in the independent study hence addition to existing knowledge.

The study also identified some methodological gaps from the previous empirical literature review on strategic leadership and performance. For example, in his study to determine strategic direction influence on organizational performance, Ng'ang'a *et al.* (2016) used a cross sectional survey approach while Alkheyi *et al*. (2020), while determining the effect of strategic leadership on the effectiveness of a team, employed quantitative research method. A similar approach was also adopted by Munawaroh, *et al.,* (2021). This study used an explanatory mixed method design to help bring out a comprehensive analysis on the relationship between succession planning and organizational performance (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Objectives of the Study

This section presents the general as well as specific objectives of the study.

General Objective

The main purpose of this study was to determine the effect of strategic leadership on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways.

Specific Objectives

The study sought to address specific objectives as listed below.

i. To determine the effect of strategic direction on Organizational performance of Kenya Airways
ii. To assess the effect of resource utilization on Organizational performance of Kenya Airways
iii. To establish the effect of organizational culture on Organizational performance of Kenya Airways
iv. To examine the effect of ethical practices on Organizational performance of Kenya Airways
v. To establish the mediating role of succession planning on the relationship between strategic leadership and Organizational performance of Kenya Airways

Research Hypothesis

The study further tested the null hypothesis listed below.

H_{01}: Strategic direction had no significant effect on organizational performance of Kenya Airways

H_{02}: Effective resource utilization had no significant effect on organizational performance of Kenya Airways

H_{03}: Organizational culture had no significant effect on organizational performance of Kenya Airways

H_{04}: Ethical practices had no significant effect on organizational performance of Kenya Airways

H_{05}: Succession planning had no significant mediating role on the relationship between strategic leadership and organizational performance of Kenya Airways.

Assumptions of the Study

This study assumed that every respondent had significant knowledge on the performance of Kenya Airways. It also assumed that the respondents understood the research questionnaire and therefore answers were objective without being biased. The other assumption was that the participants who took part in this study were truthful when it comes to providing the required information and that this information was accurate.

Justification of the Study

This study was motivated by the disturbing performance of the aviation sector and in particular Kenya Airways. The national carrier has been registering losses for several years with a record high turnover of its CEOs that raises concern of the implementation of a succession plan as documented on the airline's board charter (2017). Notably, previous studies had concentrated on strategic leadership as a single study variable (Kumar, et al.,2016; Amah & Oyetunde ,2019) very few managed to assess the combined effect with a mediating variable, a conceptual gap that this study addressed by examining the mediating effect of succession planning on the relationship between strategic leadership and performance of Kenya Airways.

Similarly, numerous studies had been done in the past to establish how strategic leadership relate with performance (Kitonga et al., 2016; Ng'ang'a et al., 2016; Donkor et al., 2018) however, the role of succession planning on strategic leadership towards organizational performance had not been studied within the context of the aviation sector, and in particular, Kenya Airways, a Contextual gap that this study addressed.

Significance of the Study

This study will be of significance to the airline industry in Kenya, and across the continent of Africa and by extension to leaders and managers of organizations that provide service. It will encourage them to appreciate the value of strategic leadership and succession planning on corporate performance. The study will be provide knowledge on the complexities of the airline industry and how the alignment of strategic leadership and succession planning could enhance an airline's survival

The study will also bring to the fore the need for regulator of Airlines , the Kenya Civil Aviation Authority (KCAA) to develop effective policies and practice that can stabilize the operations in the aviation industry. Similarly, the government through the Ministry of Transport, the Members of Parliament as well as the Kenya Airport Authority (KAA) appreciate the importance of supporting better performance of the national carrier because of its contribution to the he economic growth of Kenya. Lastly, this study augments the existing literature on strategic leadership, succession planning and organizational performance within the airline industry, and the application of strategic leadership and upper echelons theories as well as the path goal theory for the benefit of future researchers and scholars who may want to advance knowledge in this field.

Scope of the Study

This study established the mediating role of succession planning on the relation between strategic leadership and Kenya Airways performance. The research focused on the airline performance because it is key in contributing to economic growth of the nation, not only by boosting the tourism industry in Kenya, but also bringing in investors as well as providing employment to many Kenyans.

The study focused on the effects of strategic direction, resource utilization, organizational culture and ethical practices on organizational performance. Strategic direction because it advocates for long-term strategic vision that are in line with the organization's strategic intent (Mansour et al., 2020). Resource utilization because, organizations are able to effectively compete in their respective market by offering better products and services (Al Amin & Maina, 2020). Organizational culture because, it is what distinguishes one organization from another (Leithy, 2017) and lastly, ethical practices because, leadership must lead by example and exhibit good ethical leadership in order to create a positive ethical work culture within the organization thus promoting performance (Salin et al., 2019).

Further, the study was anchored on four theories namely, resource-based view theory, strategic leadership theory, upper echelon theory and path-goal leadership theory. The resource-based view theory was used in this study because it suggests that a firm's resource profile has the potential to impact on its competitive advantage (Miles, 2012) and therefore it was of contribution to this study by supporting organizational performance as the independent variables used in this study. Similarly, strategic leadership theory was used in this study because it indicates that, there is a direct link on a firm's performance and its strategic choices (Vlopp Sierra & Banzato, 2016) additionally, it is supported by the top leadership response to changes in the external environment (Norzailan et al., 2016). The Upper-echelon theory, complements the role of strategic leadership as the independent variable in this study while the path-goal theory describes an effective leader as one who motivates followers, have control over desired outcome, reward good performance and raise employee's belief in their ability to utilize their talent thus supports the succession planning as the mediating variable in this study (George & Jones, 2012).

The research took a pragmatic philosophical world view with explanatory sequential mixed method design. This involved using the quantitative as well as the qualitative methods. The study used this method because it helped bring out a comprehensive analysis on the relation between strategic leadership and organizational performance with the mediating role of succession planning, as well as addressed the limitations that come by using a single method (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Limitations and Delimitations

Mixed method design is considered a rigorous exercise because it encompasses collecting, analyzing, and interpreting quantitative as well as qualitative data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), this implies that one of the limitations in this study was time. This was addressed by using an online questionnaire to cut down on the time required to distribute the questionnaire in person. Secondly, the study developed a schedule indicating the timelines for carrying out the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018)

The possibility of disregarding data or information that supports or contradicts the hypotheses that is held by the researcher (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) thus posing a threat to the study. To mitigate this, the study avoided bias and instead, was open to all information, whether they supported the hypotheses or not. Further, this study focused on the case of a single airline-Kenya Airways, future studies can consider looking at more carriers locally or regionally for a more enhanced viewpoint of the aviation industry.

Summary

The chapter presented an introduction as well as background of the study with focus on the performance status of the aviation sector at the global, regional, and national level. Further, the three variables namely, organizational performance, strategic leadership and succession planning, that are the focus of this study were introduced. The conceptualization of the key variables of interest by different authors was highlighted as well as the general view taken by the researcher. The chapter elaborated on the problem statement that motivated this study. The objectives and the hypotheses of the study as well as the underlying assumptions, the justification of the study, its significance, scope, limitations, and delimitations were also provided.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter introduces a detailed review of several literature that has been done by different scholars on the subject under study. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), literature review not only shares the outcome of a related study from other studies but also relates a study to an ongoing dialogue thus extending previous studies as well as filling in gaps. This study therefore attempted to identify existing contextual, conceptual, and methodological gaps that exist on the topic under study. Literature review further brings clarity on the research problem (Kumar, 2011) as well as presenting a basis for establishing the significance of the study and a good guideline for comparing outcome with other findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The chapter begins with a review on the empirical literature, followed by a second section that provides a theoretical framework. The third section covers the conceptual framework and lastly a summary of the chapter.

Strategic Leadership and Organizational Performance

Strategic leadership is the aptness to scan the organizational environment, plan deliberately, articulate vision, make decisions and manage organizational change (Wart,2011). It is the ability of top leadership to develop and implement well thought plans that will enhance the organization in the long run (Strand, 2014). Munawaroh et al., (2021) asserts that strategic leadership is the capability of a leader to not only manage but also coordinate, influence as well as motivate the people one leads towards achieving the organizational goal. In other words, it is the strategy employed in an organization by the management to help achieve its vision as well as the mid-to long term goals, that determine the organization's outcome (Kim,2020). Given this definition, we can conceptualize strategic leadership to be a very crucial role in organizational performance because of the responsibility the leaders have in driving organizational goals. This conceptualization agrees with Munyao et al., (2020) sentiments that, in the same way it's impossible for an organization to achieve its goals without a strategic business approach, similarly, its sustainability cannot be achieved without the role of a strategic leader.

Several studies have indicated that strategic leadership has a positive relationship with organizational performance. One such studies is by Özer & Tınaztepe (2014) that was carried out on an export firm in Turkey, the study concluded that leaders have a significant positive impact on the organizational performance. The study, however, conceptualized strategic leadership as an established behavioral style of paternalistic, transformational, and transactional leadership, limiting itself to these three styles hence did not explore other possible leadership styles that exist.

In a similar study, Khasawneh (2020) examined the role of strategic leadership in creating competitive advantage within the tourism sector in Jordan. Using a sample of 20 people who were deemed to have extensive experience on strategic planning and management, the study concluded that there is a positive correlation between strategic leadership and improving the tourism sector's competitiveness in Jordan. This study's outcome, though in agreement with previous studies, the sample size used was relatively small, contrary to the recommendation by Creswell (2018) who suggests that, a larger sample size provides a more accurate interpretation.

Further study by Onu et al., (2018) examined the relationship between strategic leadership and performance of manufacturing firms in Nigeria. Using a cross sectional survey on a sample size of 31 manufacturing firms on the Stock Exchange in Nigerian, the study concluded that, there exists a strong relationship between strategic leadership and performance. A similar conclusion was made by Mukhezakule & Tefera (2019) on a study done on domestic airlines in South Africa. The study used mixed methods approach on a sample size of 370 participants and concluded that possible relationships exist between strategic leadership, corporate strategy, and performance of the aviation sector. These studies acknowledge that the decisions, and actions of those in position of leadership contribute to an organization's success or failure.

Moses & Murigi (2019) while examining the influence of strategic leadership on domestic airline firms in Kenya, adopted a survey research design targeting the top management from 47 domestic airline firms. The study concluded that, there is a positive relationship that exist between strategic leadership and the performance of Kenya domestic airline firms. The study, however, limited itself to domestic operations and did not consider the impact it would have on international operations. This gap was addressed in this study by examining the effect strategic leadership would have on Kenya airways performance, an airline that operates both domestic and international flights.

Strategic Direction and Organizational Performance

Converting a strategy into a vision and communicating it to the employees is what provides an organization's strategic direction (Onchieku & Ragui ,2019) .One of the core responsibilities of a strategic leader is to clearly explain the organization's mission statements to allow employees have an understanding on the organization's overall direction (Kitonga et al., 2016).Mansour *et al.,* (2020) on their part ,views strategic direction as the act of developing strategic vision that is long-term and one that defines the strategic intent of the organization. Abu *et al.,* (2021) further suggested that the strategic vision need to be based on strategic objectives of the organization. Objectives are considered necessary for the success of a firm, this is because objectives not only state the strategic direction but also aid in creating synergy within the organization, identify priorities, provided a focused coordination, enable effective planning and controlling of activities (Ng'ang'a *et al.,* 2016). Strategic planning as a component of strategic direction helps in clarifying the firm's plans as well as ensuring that the leadership is reading from the same script (Babafemi ,2015). These three components, vision, strategic goal and strategic planning provide a clear guidance on where the leadership is leading the organization and how they intent to achieve a positive performance goal.

In a recent study that used southwest airline as a case study, Gupta (2020) reviewed existing theories on strategic human resource management in explaining the role of strategic intent (also known as strategic direction) in sustaining a competitive advantage. In his study, the scholar concluded that all human resource management best practice can be successful if integrated with the firm's strategy and a strategic intent mindset. The study further reviewed similar empirical studies focusing North America, Europe, China as well as the India regions and recommended future studies to be extended on African region as well.

Donkor *et al.,* (2018) while using the moderating effect of dynamism of market to establish the relationship between SMEs performance in Ghana and Strategic planning, they concluded that, consistent employment of strategic planning concept positively supports the performance of SMEs in Ghana. In addition, market dynamics influence the performance of these SMEs if there are strategic planning in place. The study assumed a purposive sampling of 200 SMEs within the manufacturing sector in Ghana and employed a quantitative explanatory research method approach. The study further revealed that strategic planning and its implementation was not widely practiced in most of these SMEs, yet its importance is very crucial for their sustenance in an environment that is highly competitive. The study, however, limited its scope on the financial performance and did not examine the aspect of non-financial performance.

Ng'ang'a et al., (2016) in their study that focused on establishing the effects of strategic direction on the performance of tourism organizations owned by government in Kenya, a key support to the aviation industry concluded that, indeed strategic direction notably impacts the performance of the tourism agency organizations. The authors assumed a cross sectional survey and employed a mixed method approach on a sample size of 420 participants from the management as well as the non-management staff. In their view, the concept of strategic direction is intended for sustaining the organization's competitive advantage as well as its performance. Nonetheless, there is a need to have the low cadre staff involved in the strategy formation, a move that is very important because it creates a sense of involvement and ownership.

On their part, Kitonga et al., (2016) while seeking to establish the influence of strategic direction on Kenya's not-for-profit firm's performance, resolved that, there exists a good relationship between defining the strategic direction to be taken and organizational performance. The study applied a mixed method research using a sample size of 328 not-for-profit organizations and further argued that 45.7% of the performance of not-for-profit organizations is usually accounted for by defining one of the element of strategic leadership namely; the strategic direction .The authors however did not specify the other elements that account for the remaining 54.3%, a gap that this study has attempted to address by examining other strategic leadership elements that influence performance namely; resource utilization, efficient organizational culture and ethical practices. The above literature review supports that strategic direction is a key component of strategic leadership that can significantly impact on organizational performance, nonetheless more research need to be carried out within the aviation sector a gap that this study has endeavored to address.

Resource Utilization and Organizational Performance

Organizations need resources to function and achieve the desired outcome, however these resources need to be well managed. This view is supported by Al Amin & Maina (2020) who argued that, when resources are well utilized, an organization is better placed to bear comparison with their competitors by offering better products and services .Resources are either tangible (for example human resources, financial resources ,physical and organizational resources) or intangible (such as firms reputation, functional, cultural and social) but for these resources to be able to offer a competitive advantage to a firm ,they need to be hard to copy, rare and valuable (Nwachukwu & Chladkova, 2019) . Human resource undeniably, is a key resource that organizations depend on, this is because it enables a firm to respond to the environmental changes through innovation (Al Thani & Obeidat, 2020). Financial resources on the other hand, enable organizations to acquire more strategic resources thus providing a firm some level of competitive advantage (Nwachukwu & Chladkova, 2019)

Othman et al., (2015) researched on the role of tangible resources on the sustainable competitive advantage of cooperatives firms within Malaysia. Anchoring their study on Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, the authors studied 39 cooperatives registered in Malaysia and did a content analysis of the annual reports of those firms and concluded that, the cooperatives indeed recorded a positive performance from more utilization of their resources thus providing a competitive advantage for them. Further, the authors proposed that, for a firm to achieve a competitive advantage, it is critical for the leadership to extensively analyze its internal strengths as well as its weaknesses and most importantly, be well able to exploit those resources. The study, however, focused on tangible resources only in measuring performance.

Elbanna & Abdel-Maksoud (2020) carried out a study in United Arab Emirates (UAE) to establish the relationship between public organization's resources and capabilities on the performance of public organization. The study based its investigation on the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory and used a cross-sectional design method and a sample size of 76 organizations. The researchers concluded that financial and human resources as well as capabilities influence the performance of public organizations in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. The study further established a practical variation from their research and the interpretations from

RBV theory that considers human resource as the most predominant resource in a firm to influence performance. On their part, the authors concluded that, the only significant resource that can impact the social performance of the public organization in UAE is its financial resources and not human resource as stated by RBV theory. This seemingly divergent conclusion by Elbanna & Abdel-Maksoud (2020) from most of the previous research work (Al Thani & Obeidat, 2020), has left a possible gap in providing further evidence between organizational resources and its performance.

Nwachukwu & Chladkova (2019) on their study aimed at understanding the moderating role of a firm's structure on the relationship between its resources, its capability on strategic analysis and strategic performance, the authors adopted a survey research method on a sample size of 105 managerial employees from four multinational mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria. Unlike most studies, these authors adopted contingency theory in exploring how organizational resources and strategic analysis impact on performance. The study resolved that there exists a significant relationship between the three variables -firm's resources, its strategic capabilities and strategic performance. The authors further suggested that a firm's leadership can significantly improve an organization's strategic performance if they recognize the impact their organizational structure has on its resources and its strategic analysis capability. The study demonstrated that efficient utilization and allocation of resources can contribute to better strategic performance, however this is also based on a flexible and strong organizational structure. The study, however, focused only on two forms of organizational resources, namely, human and financial resources. This study managed this gap by considering a third resource -physical resources for a broader view of firm's resources that can influence performance.

Al Amin & Maina (2020) conducted a study on airlines in Kenya to ascertain the relationship between organizational resources and competitive advantage. The study adopted three theories namely, competitive advantage theory, RBV and diffusion theory. A descriptive design method was used with a sample size of 40 airlines and concluded that, financial resources, human resources as well as Information communications technology (ICT) resources, positively influence airline's competitive advantage in Kenya. This study demonstrated that, airlines should have sufficient financial resource to support its operations, invest on technology to cope with the dynamics in this sector as well as have an effective, qualified and motivated human resource for the airlines to have a competitive advantage.

Another study done by Murimi et al., (2019) focusing on small and medium manufacturing companies in Kenya sought to establish the impact of strategic physical resources on their performance. The study drew from the Resource Based View (RBV) theory and employed a descriptive as well as a causal- effect research design. Based on a sample size of 350 SME's registered under Kenya Association of Manufacturers, the authors concluded that, not only does physical resources influence the performance of these SMEs but also predicts their profitability as well as their market shares. The authors further recommended that the leadership from these SME's need to invest in physical resources to enable them to maximize on performance. The study, however, focused on physical resources only and did not explore the benefits that these SMEs could draw from other organizational resources.

The literature reviewed above revealed that, majority of the research on organizational resource employed the Resource-based view theory. Further, the studies agree that it is important for leadership to effectively manage available internal resources in an effort to promote a competitive advantage of the firm for improved organizational performance.

Organizational Culture and Organizational Performance

Culture is what defines an organization just the same way personality defines an individual. It is the distinguishing aspect of a firm's beliefs, values, the organization's work styles, as well as relationships that distinguishes one organization from another (Leithy, 2017). Culture is the accumulated shared learning that a group adapts in its attempt to solve its external and internal problems (Schein, 2016). Organizational adaptive culture according to Costanza et al., (2016) indicates an organization's awareness and concern about the environmental changes and their ability to direct their shared beliefs, values and behavior to address such changes. Adaptive culture can therefore be considered critical for survival of an organization because these environmental changes are inevitable. Corporate values as another dimension in organizational culture can act as a guide in the day-to-day strategy implementation and execution of processes for the purpose of achieving a certain organizational performance (Asma, 2018). Organizational climate is also considered an element of culture which refers to a team's spirit within the organizational level which greatly impacts on the employees, consequently influencing the quality as well as the quantity of work done in the firm (Robbins and Judge 2013, as quoted by Berberoglu, 2018)

A study done by Abubakar & Dogoji (2015) on the airline industry in the United Kingdom (UK), examined organizational culture management and its effects on employee performance. The study adopted a social constructionist philosophical view and a case study cross-reference research method. Secondary data from Virgin Atlantic and British Airways as well as 2 new low-cost airlines entrant namely, Easyjet and Ryanair were used in the study. The authors concluded that, organizational culture indeed impact on employee's performance however, within the aviation sector, the culture is subject to very strict regulations in the industry, that requires airlines to comply with regulated standards on safety and performance. The observation from the study indicated that organizational culture can be redesigned to effect changes in employee performance. The study, however, used only secondary data and therefore making generalization of finding difficult.

Seidu et al., (2021) did a study on hotel particularly those that were registered within the central part of Ghana to examine their differences in performance through organizational culture. The research adopted a quantitative approach on a sample size of 162 hotels using structured questionnaire. The study concluded that the organization's mission, employee involvement as well as its consistency, are organizational culture elements that have positive relationship with the industry performance. On the contrary however, the study did not find a significant relationship between adaptive culture and the performance of hotels in Ghana-a rather contradicting outcome from previous studies done on different sectors.

Kwarteng & Aveh (2018), carried out a study to assess the effect of organizational culture on both information system for accounting and the performance of different industrial firms in Ghana. The research adapted a theoretical model from Denison organizational culture framework on a sample size of 250 different industrial firms and collected data using survey questionnaire. The study concluded that there is indeed a notable relationship between organizational culture, information system for accounting and the firm's performance. The study further gave recommendations to corporate leaders, to pay attention to the organizational culture because it significantly influences a firm's survival and its long-term success. The study, however, limited itself to the overall profitability as a means to measure performance, a gap that this study addressed by examining other ways of measuring performance.

Mibey (2018) assessed the outcome of organizational culture on International Airline's performance in Kenya. Using a sample size of 874 management staff of the airline and descriptive research design, the study indicated that organizational cultures (eg; market culture, Adhocracy culture, clan and Hierarchy culture) notably influence the airline's performance. Nonetheless, the Kenyan International Airline seemed to lean more on the market and hierarchy culture which according to the author, focuses on stability and control, yet the outcome of the study showed that, the market culture possesses the weakest influence on the airline performance compared to the other three cultures. Very little attention was paid on the clan and adhocracy culture that focuses on flexibility and discretion -adhocracy culture on the contrary, was observed to have the strongest influence on performance among the four cultures. The study, however, did not clarify why market culture has very little influence on organizational performance.

The above reviewed literature has revealed that organizational culture has been an area of interest by many authors researching on diverse sectors in the service industry. Different research designs have also been used, for example Abubakar & Dogoji (2015) used a case study cross-reference research method and a convenience, stratified sampling procedure, while Seidu et al., (2021) used quantitative methodology and proportionate sampling technique. Kwarteng and Aveh (2018) on their part adopted survey method and probability sampling technique while Mibey (2018) used descriptive research design and purposive sampling method. This study, however, adopted the explanatory mixed method design and pproportional stratified sampling as well as purposive sampling technique. Additionally, these reviewed studies have indicated that, organizational culture positively influence a firm’s performance, implying that, organizational leadership need to pay more attention in building a strong organizational culture for a better performance.

Ethical Practices and Organizational Performance

Many businesses in the 21st century may have found it more attractive to appear ethical rather than being actually ethical, probably because the process of becoming and remaining ethical may seem expensive to them raising pertinent questions of whether today’s organizations are indeed ethical (Dimmock & Fisher, 2017). Schoeman (2014) observed that even though businesses may be aware of the ethical failures in existence and the consequences involved, it does not spontaneously translate to ethics becoming central to that organization. There is therefore a need for deliberate ethical practice in the organization and more importantly making ethics a priority not just an illusion or a luxury. Ethical practices include key values that must be cultivated right from the top leadership, these values include integrity, honesty, showing fairness as well as concern for others (Tamunomiebi & Orianzi, 2019).

Dwi Widyani et al. (2020) did a study in Indonesia on financial institutions to understand the importance of ethical behavior as well as leadership in enhancing organizational performance. Using a sample size of 34 units from the province of Bali, the authors collected data through direct interviews with the institution's chairman, secretary, and treasurer. The study concluded that ethical practices can improve the performance of the financial institutions in Bali province and therefore ethical leadership is key in organizational performance. The researchers further noted that ethical behavior is key in gaining public confidence and trust in the organization.

Salin et al. (2019) carried out another study from some of the biggest organizations by market capitalization in Malaysia. The study aimed at examining the relationship between ethical obligation by the board and the company's performance. Using a sample size of 442 firms listed in the stock exchange, the researchers collected 2 years annual report. The study established that the board's ethical commitment has a significant and positive relationship with the company's performance. The observation from the study indicated that the executive leadership has a responsibility to lead by example and exhibit good ethical leadership in order to create a positive ethical work culture within the organization. In addition, it is their responsibility to establish a code of ethics to be followed which should not just be a statement pinned on the wall but there is a need to have a good system to promote as well as ensure compliance of the codes of conduct. The study, however, focused on data from the annual reports to make the conclusion without getting data directly from the company to establish the existing ethical practices which may not have been visible from the published annual reports.

A study done by Okafor (2022) on the aviation sector in Nigeria, examined the role of ethical approach on its environment as well as the Sustainability Accounting Practices (SAP) on the airline overall performance in Nigeria. The study used an exploratory research design and a practical case review from Air peace airline in Nigeria. The study looked at the benefits that Air peace airline could achieve from practicing ethical corporate social responsibilities (CSR) and concluded that, they can promote the organization's reputation and have the potential to convert this reputation into market opportunities and long-term profitability. The study further recommended that airlines should exploit ethical CSR as a practical strategy for a positive public reputation that can result in improved performance. The ethical approach from this study, however, focused only on the external environment and failed to integrate the perspective of the internal stakeholders.

In another study Barare & Wambua (2018) sought to establish the relationship between ethical leadership and the performance of Kenya Revenue Authority. A descriptive survey research method with a sample size of 175 management and non-management staff from Kenya Revenue Authority was adopted in the study. The study concluded that a leader's integrity, ethical recruitment process, training ethical practices and overall ethical corporate culture have a positive relationship with corporate performance. Although the above studies demonstrate an attempt to establish the role of ethical practices and the performance of different sectors, very little has been done on the aviation sector and particularly in Kenya, and this is one of the gaps this study has addressed.

The Mediating Role of Succession Planning

Succession planning is a deliberate plan by top leadership to identify potential leaders within the organization then mentor and share knowledge for continuity and talent retention

(Saporito, & Winum, 2012; Galbraith et al., 2012) .Succession planning can be achieved through talent retention, leadership development (Galbraith et al., 2012; Akani, 2015), knowledge transfer (Shelley, 2016) and stable leadership tenure because executive turnover, result to new complexities and increases instability (Robken, 2007), as stated by Morgan & Davar, (2020).

Wilson & Lohmann (2019) did a study on airline CEOs to establish if the prevalent succession for a CEO in the aviation sector was dependent on the individual's financial background or functional background or insider versus an outsider CEO. The study employed a mixed-method research approach using both primary and secondary data from 100 of the world's largest airlines highlighting the criteria used in selecting CEOs by the different company boards. The results showed that 50% of the top largest airlines preferred a finance CEO because they are considered safer to lead, especially in turbulent economic times, while 24% preferred an operations CEO to succeed an outgoing CEO. The study further indicated that 72% of the airline boards preferred an insider CEO, an approach that seem to approve the views from Schepker et al., (2017) who observed that, internal top leadership succession planning, improves a firm's long-term performance with less engagement on strategic change, while external direct hiring encourages strategic changes that usually bring about lower performance in the long-term. The study by Wilson & Lohmann (2019) further observed that a small percentage of the airline boards were more open to an outsider CEO. This study however, though it indicated the importance of a well thought succession process for a company CEO, it did not measure the performance of those airlines to relate it with the succession approach used to strengthen its predictive power.

Amirkhani et al., (2016) did a study using organizational commitment as the mediating variable to establish the impact of succession planning on the performance of Water and Sewage Company in Tehran. The study assumed descriptive research using a survey approach and questionnaire to gather data from a sample size of 217 employees. Secondary data was also collected from libraries and reputable websites. The findings indicated that succession directly impacts organization performance through commitment. This implies that organizations must be deliberate in showing commitment geared at supporting succession process for them to have a better corporate performance.

Barkhuizen et al. (2014), examined the perception of employees on how their leaders within the South African aviation industry, responded to talent management practices, and concluded that the leaders' commitment on talent management was low. The study employed a survey design on a sample size of 150 employees and suggested that there is need to equip leaders with essential business acumen to ensure succession based on talent management become a priority within the operations of South African aviation sector. The study however did not examine how the retention of talents as an element of succession planning would impact on performance.

Another study by Shatilwe & Amukugo (2016) to examine the issues affecting the employment of succession planning within the Namibian Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS), the study adopted a quantitative, exploratory, descriptive method with a sample size of 110 managers from the ministry. The study concluded that the implementation of succession planning is hindered by leadership reluctance in embracing succession planning. Moreover, they did not view succession planning as part of their responsibility. In addition, deficiency of information on succession planning and criteria to conduct clear assessment as well as internal resistance to change are some of the reasons that succession planning has not been successful in the ministry. The study therefore recommended the need to create more awareness of succession planning within the sector and in particular within the leadership level. Therefore, succession planning should not only be included in the strategic plan, but it should also be part and parcel of the corporate culture for it to be a success.

Ahmed (2020) did a study on the effect of succession planning on Family Bank performance in Kenya. The study used a sample size of 92 Family Bank employees and adopted a descriptive research design. The researcher concluded that succession planning involved preparing the organization for leadership change while retaining and rewarding high performing employees for a significant performance of the family bank. The study, however, measured performance by using primary data obtained from the respondents through questionnaire but did not factor in financial reports in its analysis. Nonetheless, the study agrees with previous studies that succession planning significantly influences organizational performance.

According to a survey done by American Institute of Certified Public Accountants in 2012, only 6% of sole practitioners and less than half of multi-owner firms had a documented succession plan (Barry,2014). These figures are quite alarming given that executive transition is almost inevitable, an indication that little attention has been given to succession planning in most organizations.

Theoretical Framework

Theories help in explaining what a researcher seeks to discover in a study (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). This study was anchored on the Resource based view theory (RBV) as the main theory, supported by Strategic leadership theory, Upper echelon theory and path-goal leadership theory in establishing the relationship between strategic leadership, succession planning and organizational performance.

Resource Based View Theory

This theory emerged from the work of Edith Penrose in 1959 and suggested that organizational development is shaped by deliberate attempts to effectively utilize its resources (Lockett, 2005). Other contributions to the theory can be found in the work of

Wernerfelt (1984) on the field of strategic management and suggested that a firm's resource profile has the potential to impact on its competitive advantage. The theory is characterized by four key tenets, namely, value, resources, rarity, inimitability, and organizational capability (Barney, 2001). According to Barney et al. (2012). The supporting framework of the resource-based view theory considers these resources to be valuable, infrequent, and difficult to imitate thus enabling a firm to attain competitive advantage.

On Value, the theory states that, firms that possess and continue to utilize valuable resources within a strategic factor market that is imperfectly competitive, can enjoy sustained economic rents by utilizing those resources in developing and implementing strategies (Barney et al., 2012). On resources, the theory considers to be either tangible or intangible and thus includes physical resources, organizational resources as well as human resources. A resource is considered valuable if it permits a firm to effectively utilize the opportunities available in the market. On the other hand, a resource is considered difficult to imitate and rare if the organizations involved in the arena of competition is less than what is required to create a perfect competition (Chandran, 2014 as quoted by Al Amin & Maina, 2020).

The resource-based theory contends that firms compete against others based on their resources and capabilities (Miles, 2012). This theory further answers the question why some firms persistently outperform others and this, they related it with management capabilities (Barney & Clark, 2007). Capability refers to a firm's processes that generate value through resource utilization such as product development (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000 as quoted by Madhani, 2010). Consequently, the leader's ability to develop capabilities to improve the firm's adaptive ability, can help enhance the organization's survival prospects in an ever changing and competitive environment (Esteve-Pérez & Mañez-Castillejo, 2008). It further argues that, since strategies are created by those in top leadership, their cognitive ability and values reflect on the organization's performance. Additionally, a leader's knowledge, experience and preferences greatly influence their ability to assess the external environment, and make strategic choices for the organization (Phipps & Burbach, 2010)

Freeman et al. (2021) however argues that ,this theory ,is incomplete in its current state, and suggests that it can be made more comprehensive by improving the idea of sustainability as well as considering people beyond being just resources, as well as incorporating the firm behaviors .Nonetheless, notwithstanding this limitation, the context of resource-based theory of a firm, human capital is considered a key resource with a pointer on succession management (Paauwe, 2008 as stated by Waruiru & Kagiri, 2015).

This theory therefore supports the dependent variable organizational performance in understanding how an organization can achieve a competitive advantage through effective utilization of its resources .It further supports the independent variable strategic leadership in this study in understanding the role of those in leadership in developing a roadmap that integrate the unique capabilities of the organization with its goals, hence formulating an organizational strategy that enhances efficiency. (Szymaniec-Mlicka,2014).

Strategic Leadership Theory

The concept on Strategic leadership was developed by Chandler (1962), then later by Ansoff (1977) and Mintczerg (1980). It emerged from the upper echelons' theory created by Hambrick and Mason (1984), who argued that the outcome of an organization in terms of its strategies and effectiveness, are regarded as the reflection of the values held by powerful top actors within the organization. According to Boal & Hooijberg (2000) a key premise of strategic leadership theory includes the capacity to change, learn, as well as the capacity to manage talent.

A major focus of this theory involves explaining the role of top leadership in creating the mission and vision of an organization as well as providing strategic direction to influence followers towards achieving organizational goals (Som & Sumi, 2018). This theory further indicates that there is a direct link on a firm's performance and its strategic choices (Vlopp Sierra & Banzato, 2016) and involves top leadership response to changes in the external environment (Norzailan et al. 2016).

The key essence of strategic leadership, therefore, is to promote strategic decision making that engage an organization towards achieving a desired goal (Harrison & Pelletier, 1997) and provides the approach to strategy by managers (Whittington, 2008) by engaging in intentional leadership which require looking beyond a firm's functional boundaries to comprehend the bigger picture of the business (Patterson, 2014). This theory is therefore used in the study to support the independent variable- strategic leadership in understanding the role of strategic leadership in providing strategic direction towards achieving the desired organizational goals.

Upper Echelons Theory

The theory was developed by Hambrick & Mason (1984) and states that, the outcome of an organization as well as its strategic choices and performance are to some extent predicted by the top leadership values, personalities, and experiences. Finkelstein & Hambrick (1990) contributed to the theory by analyzing the role of the theory on top leadership tenure and organizational performance and concluded that long tenure has a significant effect on organization's strategy and performance. The theory opines that, the experience of the entire top leadership needs to be factored in, to accurately understand the outcome of an organization. Therefore, the reason why an organization would perform or do things differently, can be explained by taking into consideration the top leadership's biases as well as their disposition (Donald et al., 2001).

Hambrick (2007) enhanced the theory by introducing two moderators that affect the predictive strength of the theory namely, managerial discretion and top leadership job demands. In his view, the upper echelon's theory states that, if the level of managerial discretion in existence is high then it is reflected on the organization's strategy as well as its performance. Similarly, those executives that work under heavy demands are likely to work with what they have seen work before and therefore their decisions tend to reflect on their dispositions as well as their background while those that work under minimal demands tend to be more comprehensive in how they analyze situations and therefore make decisions that objectively march the situations at hand.

One of the critics of this theory is by Oppong (2014), in his view, the argument that a leader's demographics factors influence a firm performance as suggested by this theory has been assumed and consequently remains unexplored to some extent. This notwithstanding, the theory has been used in this study to complement the role of strategic leadership as the independent variable and organizational performance as the dependent in understanding that the decision made by these strategic leaders' as well as their values impact on the overall performance of an organization.

Path-Goal Leadership Theory

This theory was developed by House (1971) and refined further it in 1974 (House ,1974), Schriesheim, & Von Glinow (1977) and Greene (1979). The proponent of this theory suggests that leaders or mentors can effectively assist those working under them along the path to achieve desired goals by adopting specific behaviors that best suit the protégé's needs as well as the situation in which they are working in. An effective mentor, therefore, is one that assists his/her protégé attain the set goals and provide direction to achieve desired results compatible with the organization's objective (Robbins & Judge, 2017).

The theory describes an effective leader as one who will motivate followers, have control over desired outcome, reward good performance and raise employee's belief in their ability to utilize their talent (George & Jones, 2012). The theory is, however, quite broad and consists of several sets of assumptions that are interrelated. According to Northouse (2016) it is hard to fully use path-goal leadership theory in an attempt to improve leadership process within an organization. Nonetheless, the relationship between the leader and his subordinates is important for assessing a subordinate's skills and recommend growth path and promotions opportunities in the organization. Similarly, as the long serving leaders move from the workforce to retirement, this process becomes critical for the success and continuity of the organization (McIntyre, 2019). This theory, therefore, supports the succession planning as the mediating variable used in the study.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework forms the basis of a research problem. It outlines the aspects adopted from the theoretical framework which form the basis of the research (Kumar, 2011).

The conceptual framework on Fig 2.1 below, indicates that, strategic leadership is the independent variable which has been conceptualized as strategic direction, organizational culture, ethical practices (Kim, 2020; Banmore et al., 2019; Nyong'a & Maina, 2019) and efficient utilization of the company's resource (Ahmad et al., 2020; Ojogiwa, 2021).

The conceptual framework further indicates organizational performance as the dependent variable which has been conceptualized as financial and non-financial performance. A Return On Assets (ROA) approach, along with Return On Equity (ROE) and the market share were used to measure the financial performance ,while the non-financial performance was determined by Customer satisfaction, which is defined as the judgment by a consumer in regard to his/her sense of fulfillment from the use of a product or service (Guido, 2015), Employee loyalty -defined as a psychological attachment to the organization because of increased Job satisfaction and a willingness to continue working for the organization (Rajput et al., 2016)) and Service quality which is perceived as the holistic image of a firm in the customer's mind (Walia et al., 2021)

Succession planning as the mediating variable, was conceptualized as talent retention, knowledge transfer, leadership development and leadership tenure. The relationship of the three variables were then examined to establish how they are interrelated and their potential outcome on Kenya Airways performance. The study further tested five null hypotheses derived from the framework.

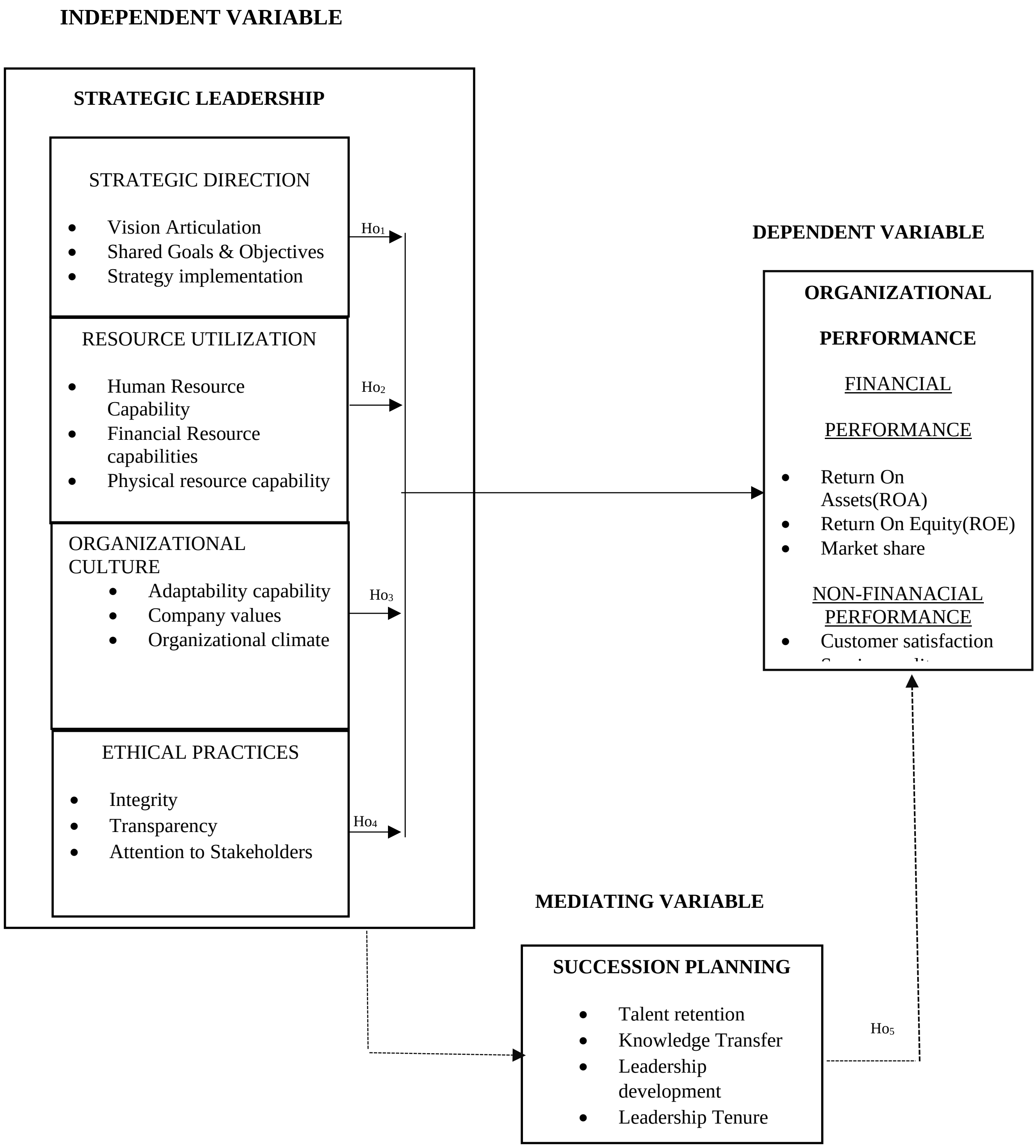

Figure 2:1 Conceptual Framework

A Summary of Research Gaps

A research gap creates a starting point for research (Müller-Bloch & Kranz ,2015) and provides a nexus for increasing knowledge frontiers (Partti ,2016 as quoted by Coker & Macaulay,2019). This study categorized the identified gaps into conceptual, contextual, methodological and knowledge gaps.

Conceptually, previous studies integrated strategic leadership with corporate strategy for sustainable organizational performance (Mukhezakule & Tefera, 2019). Singh et al., (2016 as quoted by Jaleha, & Machuki, 2018) alluded that, the core aim of strategic leadership in research is to appreciate the influence that top leadership has on performance. Another research on the banking sector by Dahri et al., (2019) indicated that strategic leadership has a considerable influence on both knowledge management and organizational performance. Similarly, Aldhaafri and Alosani (2021) looked at the effect of strategic planning within the public sector and found a mediating mechanism role between leadership and organizational performance. However, Fitza (2017) opined that executive actions are hindered by random effects or situational constraints, in such a way that the leaders do not have much control over performance. This seemingly divergent conclusion from Fitza (2017) from most of the research has left a possible gap in providing further evidence between strategic leadership and organizational performance. This study attempted to address this gap by evaluating the mediating role of succession planning on the top leadership and organizational performance.

Similarly, majority of the previous research concentrated on organizational performance as a single study variable (Kumar, *et al.*,2016; Amah & Oyetunde ,2019) very few managed to assess the combined effect with a mediating variable. This study addressed this gap by examining the mediating role of succession planning between organizational performance and strategic leadership variables.

Contextually, from the reviewed literature, despite the numerous studies done to establish how strategic leadership relate with performance in different business sectors such as ;not for-profit organization, government owned tourism organizations and SME’s (Kitonga et al., 2016; Ng’ang’a et al., 2016; Donkor et al., 2018) very little has been done on the aviation sector and particularly within the Kenyan context, a gap that this paper addressed by examining the relationship of the variables on Kenya Airways performance.

Similarly, the study also identified some methodological gaps from the previous empirical literature review on strategic leadership and performance. Some studies adopted a different research design from the design that was used in this study. For example, in their study, Alkheyi et al. (2020) and Munawaroh, et al. (2021) used quantitative research method, while Ng’ang’a et al. (2016) used a cross sectional survey approach. This study used an explanatory mixed method design. The goal was to bring a comprehensive analysis on the relationship between executive succession planning and organizational performance (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

On sampling methods, Nyong’a & Maina (2019) used a simple random sampling method while Alkheyi et al. (2020) applied probability random sampling. Murimi et al. (2019) and Ng’ang’a et al. (2016) used stratified sampling method. This study used a purposive sampling method -this sampling is elicited from the researcher’s assessment on who can provide the needed information. In this case our target is the strategic leadership that comprises of Kenya Airways leadership team. This approach was appropriate for this study because the participants had been identified as the best positioned to provide the information needed for the study (Kumar, 2011).

The researcher also identified a knowledge gap. A study done by Kitonga et al. (2016), that sought to establish the influence of strategic direction on not-for-profit firm’s performance in Kenya within the county of Nairobi, revealed that,45.7% of those firm’s performance was accounted for, by defining their strategic direction, while other factors that the authors did not specify accounted for the remaining 54.3%. This study sought to address this gap by considering other factors like resource utilization, organizational culture and ethical practices that possibly would explain the 54.3% that Kitonga et al. (2016) identified as ‘other factors.

The study by Al Khajeh (2018) examined how leadership styles impact organizational performance with focus on transformational, autocratic, charismatic, democratic, transactional, and bureaucratic leadership styles. While the researcher did establish that there is a substantial impact of styles of leadership on the performance of an organization, he did not examine how strategic leadership can affect organizational performance. This study, therefore, addressed this gap by establishing how organizational performance at Kenya Airways is influenced by strategic leadership.

Table 2.1 Summary of Research and Knowledge Gaps

Researcher	Study Focus	Methodology	Findings	Knowledge gap	How gap will be addressed in the current study
Kumar et al. (2016)	Framework on the determinants of organizational performance	The study used a systematic review of articles on the factors that influence organizational performance.	The study concluded that a leader's cognitive, emotional, and social competencies influence, both employee and organizational performance.	The study concentrated on organizational performance as a single study variable. Used empirical literature to collect data	This study addressed this gap by using three variables: succession planning, strategic leadership, and organizational performance. This study used both primary and secondary data
Mungai & Bula (2018)	The relationship between turnaround strategy and Kenya airways performance	The study adopted a descriptive research design	The study revealed that revenue generating, cost reduction, asset reduction and financial restructuring strategies affected the performance of Kenya Airways positively and contributed a lot to its turnaround	The study used two variables namely, turn round strategy and organizational performance but did not use a combined effect with a mediating variable.	This study addressed this gap by examining the mediating role of succession planning on strategic leadership and organizational performance. of Kenya airways
Ng'ang'a et al. (2016)	Influence of strategic direction on organizational performance in tourism agencies in Kenya	The study used a cross sectional survey research design.	The study concluded that strategic direction influences the organizational performance of tourism agencies significantly	The focus of the study was on the tourism sector in Kenya using cross sectional survey research	This study focused on the aviation sector, in particularly, Kenya Airways and adopt an explanatory mixed method design

Kitonga et al. (2016)	The study examined the role of Strategic Direction on the performance of Not-For-Profit Organizations in Nairobi County in Kenya	The study employed a mixed method research	The study revealed that, a positive relationship exists between strategic direction and organizational performance. The study further revealed that,45.7% of the Not-for-profit firm's performance was accounted for, by defining their strategic direction	The study was done within the context of Not-for-Profit organization in Kenya The study did not specify the factors that accounted for the remaining 54.3%.	The context of this study was on the aviation sector in particular Kenya Airways. This study sought to address this gap by considering other factors like resource utilization, organizational culture and ethical practices that possibly would explain the 54.3% that Kitonga et al., (2016) identified as 'other factors'
Al Khajeh (2018)	Examined how leadership styles impact organizational performance with focus was on transformational, autocratic, charismatic, democratic, transactional, and bureaucratic leadership styles	A quantitative research method was utilized in the study.	The study established that, there is a substantial impact of styles of leadership on the performance of an organization	The study did not examine how strategy leadership can affect organizational performance. The study quantitative research method only	This study addressed this gap by establishing how organizational performance at Kenya Airways is influenced by strategic leadership. This study used both quantitative and qualitative research methods.
Munawaroh, et al. (2021)	The study examined the effect of Strategic Leadership and Organization culture on Performance	A quantitative research method and a simple random sampling technique were used	The study concluded that strategic leadership and organizational culture have a significant effect on business performance	The study used quantitative research method only	This study used a mixed method design to provide a more enriched understanding of Kenya airways and eliminate possible shortcomings from the use of a single approach

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a detailed review of empirical literature from previous studies on strategic leadership, organizational performance, and succession planning. It further identified research gaps and categorized them as contextual, conceptual, and methodological gaps that were addressed in this study. The various theories that supported this study were also discussed. Finally, a conceptual framework that provided a summary of the different elements used under each variable was also presented.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

Introduction

Research methodology embodies the means of finding answers to research questions (Kumar, 2011). This chapter explains the research methodology that was adopted in this study, including the research philosophy, the design that was used, the selected sample size, and the sampling method. It further discusses the different types of data and the methods that were employed to gather it. Additionally, a description of the pre-testing instrument that was applied and a detailed account of how the data was analyzed are provided.

Research Philosophy

Research philosophy can be viewed as a way of reasoning that creates sense from the complexities that exists in the real world (Patton, 2002 as quoted by Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). Creswell (2018) highlights four commonly used philosophies which include, post- positivism, transformative, constructivism, and pragmatism. This research assumed a pragmatic philosophical world view, which is a research paradigm that is directed towards solving practical problems (Kaushick & Walsh, 2019) which spring from actions, situations, and consequences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Pragmatists agree that reality is not static. It can have either single or multiple realities and, therefore, open to empirical review (Creswell & Clark, 2011, as quoted by Kaushick & Walsh, 2019). One key benefit of using this approach is that it allows a researcher to use all available approaches to understand a problem, thus giving the researcher the freedom to choose the technique, the method, as well as the research procedures that best suits the needs and purposes of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The pragmatic research philosophy is thus adopted for this study because it supports the mixed research method that was used in this study, it integrates both qualitative and quantitative research designs hence providing a more holistic perspective in research thus generating a more balanced conclusion. Additionally, the approach helps in understanding how different meanings are connected with the context of the study (Toyon, 2021; Kaushick & Walsh, 2019).

Research Design

Research designs are strategies of inquiry that provide explicit direction in a research study (Creswell & Creswell,2018). It is a procedural plan adopted in research to objectively and accurately answer research questions (Kumar, 2011). The study adopted an explanatory sequential mixed design which involved, collecting first the quantitative data, then the qualitative data in the second phase and thus the term sequential. The premise of this research approach is that the integration of the two approaches gives a more complete utilization of the data thus providing a more enriched understanding of Kenya Airways in greater depth by eliminating possible shortcomings from the use of a single approach and increase confidence in the findings (Lederman & Lederman, 2013; Bowel et al., 2017). The goal is to bring a comprehensive analysis on the relationship between strategic leadership, succession planning and organizational performance (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Once quantitative data is analysed qualitative data is then used to further elaborate on the results from the quantitative data and thus the term “explanatory”(Creswell ,2018). The study therefore used the results from quantitative data to obtain a general picture of Kenya airways performance ,then a further analysis, through the qualitative data was carried out to help achieve an in-depth view from the participants that helped refine and further explain the general picture obtained from the quantitative data.

Target Population

A target population is the population of interest that a researcher intends to study (Majid, 2018),whose participants possess specific attributes that are relevant to the study

(Asiamah et al., 2017) . The target population in this study comprised of Kenya Airways top and middle management team across 12 departments as indicated on table 3.1 below. This is because strategic leadership is a construct that is executed by the leadership of an organization (Luciano et al., 2020).

Table 3.1 Target Population

Department	No.of Management staff
Operations Team	18
Finance	16
Technical	14
Managing Director Office	11
Commercial	11
Human Resource	10
Sales and Marketing	10
Cargo	7
Information Technology	6
Corporate Communication	5
Legal Office	2
Corporate quality, safety and environment	2
Total	112

Source: Kenya Airways human resource office (2023)

Population Sample and Sampling Method

Determining the appropriate sample size is a critical step in research as it ensures the desired level of accuracy and allows for appropriate population analysis (Kaur, 2017). According to Creswell (2018), a larger sample size provides a more precise interpretation. However, recruiting more participants can be both costly and time-consuming.

One commonly used approach to determine the sample size is the Yamane Statistical Formula (Oribhabor & Anyanwu, 2019). This study adopted this formula to determine the sample population, which consisted of 112 members of Kenya Airways' management team. The unit of measurement was the 12 departments listed on Table 3.1, and the focus of the study was the top and middle leadership teams selected from those departments. The formula, n = N/ [1 + N(e)^2], where n represents the sample size, N represents the study population, and e represents the confidence level of 95%, was used to calculate the sample size for this study. According to this formula, the sample size that was used in this study was computed as follows.

n = N/ [1+N (e) 2]

n=112/ (1+112(0.05) *2)

n=112/ (1+112(0.0025))

n=87.5

n=88

The sample size for this study was determined to include 88 participants from Kenya Airways' management team. These individuals were selected as the unit of analysis for the study.Sampling method or technique is the procedure that a researcher engages in selecting the respondents for the study (Oribhabor & Anyanwu, 2019). The first sampling method that was applied in this study was the proportional stratified sampling which ensured every sample size from each stratum (department) was kept proportionate to the stratum’s size (Pirzadeh et al., 2011) as indicated on table 3.2 below. The premise behind this choice of sampling method was to help eliminate potential biasness and ensure a balance representation of the target population hence resulting in an effective generalization from the chosen sample (Sharma, 2017). Therefore, if there are H strata and a population size of Nh within a stratum h (in this case h represents the different departments) and a sample size of n units, then the proportional sample size is determined by Nh = n (/Nh/N)

Where;

Nh=88

n= sample size of each department

N=Population size

For example, to establish the sample size for the operations department the study was calculated as shown below.

N*h* = n (/N*h*/N)

=88(18/112)

=14

Table 3.2 Sample Distribution

Department	Sample Size
Operations Team	14
Finance	12
Technical	11
Managing Director Office	8
Commercial	8
Human Resource	8
Sales and Marketing	8
Cargo	6
Information Technology	5
Corporate Communication	4
Legal Office	2
Corporate quality, safety and environment	2
Total	88

A purposive sampling method was then used before carrying out the open-ended interview for the qualitative phase. This method is based on the researcher's judgement on who can provide the needed information (Kumar, 2011). In this case, the study considered the years of service that the leadership team from the sample size of 88 identified in the first phase had served in Kenya Airways. This approach was considered appropriate for this study because, the research problem assumed that the participant with more years of service, was more likely to have more information on the history of the airline and therefore best positioned to provide the information needed for the study (Kumar,2011). The study, therefore, considered the leaders that had been in the organizations for more than 10 years.

Types of Data

This study employed both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data, as defined by Kumar (2011), refers to first-hand information collected directly from respondents, while secondary data refers to existing information that only requires extraction.Quantitative data was collected using a structured questionnaire. This approach was chosen because it ensures uniformity of information across different respondents, allowing for comparability and ease of analysis (Kumar, 2011). Qualitative primary data, on the other hand, was collected through virtual interviews using open-ended questions. Virtual interviews were selected as a convenient method for participants, and open-ended questions were employed to encourage participants to express themselves more freely (Creswell, 2018).

In addition to primary data, secondary data was collected from publicly available financial reports of Kenya Airways spanning from 2013 to 2021, this is because the study considered the data for this period sufficient to provide the relevant information. This financial data was accessed from the company's website. The use of documents as a secondary data source was chosen for its convenience, time-saving nature, and the fact that they represent information that participants have previously given attention to (Creswell, 2018). To expedite the data collection and cleaning process, two research assistants were recruited. Their involvement aimed to enhance efficiency and ensure accurate and timely data management.

Data Collection Methods and Procedures

The study collected quantitative data from the identified sample size of 88 top and middle management members of Kenya Airways using a semi-structured questionnaire. A questionnaire, as defined by Kumar (2011), is a list of written questions that respondents read, interpret, and record their answers to. This method was chosen because it is cost-effective, convenient for researchers, and offers greater anonymity since it does not require face-to-face interaction (Kumar,2011). To ensure confidentiality, a link to the questionnaire was sent to the participants electronically via email, allowing them to respond without the need to identify themselves. Close follow-ups and reminders were conducted via email to encourage respondents and provided an opportunity for them to seek clarification if needed.

The questionnaire consisted of seven sections that covered the three variables examined in the study: strategic leadership, succession planning, and organizational performance. The questions were structured using a five-point Likert Scale, ranging from a score of one (Not at All) to a score of five (Very High Extent). The Likert Scale approach was adopted as it provides the participants with the freedom to choose a response that best align with their views in a balanced and symmetric manner, allowing for a range of responses from very high extent to not at all (Joshi et al., 2015).

The results obtained from the quantitative data analysis informed the formulation of open-ended questions for the qualitative phase of the study (Creswell, 2018). Due to logistical constraints, the interviews were conducted virtually since many managers were not available for physical interviews. The sampling for the qualitative phase was based on years of service in the organization, specifically targeting leaders who had been with Kenya Airways for more than 10 years. This decision was made under the assumption that they would possess the necessary insights and experiences relevant to the study (Kumar, 2011). The number of interviewees was determined based on reaching a saturation point, where new information or themes ceased to emerge (Islam & Aldaihani, 2022).

The open-ended interview method was chosen for the qualitative phase as it allows respondents to freely express their opinions in a detailed manner, providing a wealth of information (Kumar, 2011). Additionally, a documentary analysis of secondary data was conducted using Kenya Airways published financial reports from their website, covering the period between 2013 and 2021. The findings from the quantitative and qualitative data were compared with the secondary data analysis to either support or nullify the hypotheses in the study, adding further depth and evidence to the research findings in the study.

Table 3.3: operationalization of the Study Variable

VARIABLE	OPERATIONAL DEFINITION	INDICATORS	SCALE OF MEASUREMENT IN QUESTIONAIRRE
Succession planning	A deliberate plan by top leadership to identify potential leaders within the organization then mentor and share knowledge for continuity and talent retention	• Talent retention • Knowledge Transfer • Leadership development • Leadership Tenure	Nominal scale Section of the questionnaire on a scale 1 to 5.
Strategic direction	The ability to convert a strategy into a vision and effectively communicate it to the employees	• Vision Articulation • Shared Goals & Objectives • Strategy implementation	Nominal scale Section B of the questionnaire on a scale 1 to 5.
Resource Utilization	Effective and efficient leveraging of resources	• Human Resource Capability • Financial Resource capabilities • Physical resource capability	Nominal scale-Section C of the questionnaire on a scale 1 to 5.
Organizational culture	Culture is what defines an organization	• Adaptability capability • Company values • Organizational climate	Nominal scale Section D of the questionnaire on a scale 1 to 5
Ethical practices	Precepts that guide the interaction between the employees and the organization, as well as other related external parties	• Integrity • Transparency • Attention to Stakeholders	Nominal scale Section E of the questionnaire on a scale 1 to 5.
Organizational Performance	The capacity to maintain profitable and competitiveness in comparison with other organizations.	Financial Performance • Return On Assets (ROA) • Return On Equity (ROE) • Market share Non-financial Performance • Customer satisfaction • Service quality • Employee loyalty	Nominal scale Section G of the questionnaire on a scale 1 to 5.

Pre-testing of Questionnaire

Pre-testing is a crucial research tool used to assess how respondents understand and interpret the questions. It is recommended to conduct the pre-test on a population with similar characteristics, rather than the actual study sample (Kumar, 2011). In line with this recommendation, the pre-test participants in this study were drawn from the security department, which was not part of the twelve-department unit of measure identified for the study.

Determining the sample size for a pre-test is not strictly prescribed, but Sheatsley (1983, as cited by Chaudhary & Israel, 2014) suggested a sample size of 10-25 participants. Following this recommendation, the study randomly selected a sample size of 10 participants from the top and middle security leadership team to conduct the pre-testing of the questionnaire. Phone interviews were chosen for the pre-test as they are fast and cost-effective. It is important to note that the results of the pre-test were not included in the final study analysis.

The pre-testing process allowed the researcher to identify any issues or difficulties that respondents might have had in understanding or interpreting the questions. It also helped to assess the appropriateness and validity of the questionnaire content, as well as provided insights into potential fatigue concerns and the likely duration of the study (Creswell, 2018). Overall, the pre-testing phase helped to refine and improve the questionnaire before administering it to the actual study participants.

Validity of the Research Instrument

The validity of an instrument refers to its appropriateness and accuracy in finding answers to the research questions. It is therefore important for a researcher to establish if the instrument used for collecting data will provide the answers to the research questions for which the research was intended for (Kumar, 2011). According to Creswell (2018) the validity of an instrument can be established by examining whether the instrument will measure what it is intended to measure. The study established the validity of the questionnaire by aligning each question in regard to the objectives of the study to establish if there was a logical link between the questions and the study objectives ,also known as face validity (Kumar, 2011).Similarly, a content validity was done by establishing if the questions covered all the issues or attitude that were measured in the study (Kumar, 2011) to enable the researcher to draw meaningful as well as useful interpretations from the outcome of data that was collected.

Reliability of the Research Instrument

A research instrument is considered reliable if it is consistent and stable thus if used repeatedly under constant or similar condition it will provide the same results. Therefore, reliability is the degree of accuracy that the questionnaire will make in the study. According to Kumar (2011), the lesser the degree of 'error' the higher the degree of the instrument's consistency. The Cronbach alpha model provides an approximation of the proportional variance that is consistent in a list test scores. A variance of + 1.0 is considered a positive variance, while - 1.0 a negative variance and 0.0 suggest no variance. According to the model, the closer variance is to +1.0, the higher the reliability (Kennedy, 2022). As a rule of thumb, a reliability of 0.7 is considered sufficient, according to the Cronbach's alpha coefficient the normal range for testing reliability ranges from 0 to 1.0; where 0.7 is considered the lowest level of acceptable reliability while 1.0 is considered a perfect reliability (Robinson, 2009 as quoted by Taherdoost, 2016). The study therefore adopted the commonly used Cronbach Alpha coefficient with a value range between 0.7 and 1.0 reliability.

As shown in table 3.4 below, strategic direction, resource utilization, organizational culture, ethical practices, succession planning, and organizational performance all had Cronbach's Alpha statistics exceeding 0.7. Overall, a Cronbach Alpha of 0.839 was established from the items of the study indicating a high level of internal consistency and reliability.

Table 3.4: Reliability Statistics

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Strategic Direction	0.791	12
Resource utilization	0.981	10
Organizational Culture	0.855	9
Ethical practices	0.854	7
Succession Planning	0.747	6
Organizational performance	0.757	7
Overall	**0.839**	**51**

Diagnostic Test

Testing for Normality

Statistical test for analysing data aims at achieving valid results, for example, normality testing ensures samples are from identical distributions. It requires that the target populations from which the samples will be drawn from follow the normal distribution (Tsagris & Pandis, 2021). According to Kwak & Park (2019) some of the commonly adopted ways of carrying out a normality test, include, the Anderson-Darling test, Shapiro-Wilk test and Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. This study used Shapiro-Wilk's test which assumes that the null-hypothesis for a population is normally distributed and therefore p-value that exceed 0.05 ($p>0.05$), suggest a normal distribution sample while a p-value below 0.05 suggest a deviation from the normal distribution (Khatun, 2021).

Testing for Linearity

The assumption of a linear relationship between the independent variable (predictor) and the dependent variable (outcome) was adopted in this study. To measure the strength and direction of the linear relationship between the variables, the Pearson correlation coefficient method was utilized (Schober et al., 2018). The Pearson correlation coefficient provides a measure of the extent to which a change in one variable is associated with a change in another variable, indicating a monotonic relationship (Schober et al., 2018). In assessing the linear relationship, significance values play a crucial role. Verma and Abdel-Salam (2019) state that a linear relationship exists between variables when the significance value is less than 0.05, indicating statistical significance. The correlation coefficient ranges from -1 to +1, with values closer to 0 indicating a weak relationship, values closer to -1 indicating a strong negative relationship, and values closer to +1 indicating a strong positive relationship (Rahman & Zhang, 2016).

Testing for Multicollinearity

Multicollinearity refers to the correlation between two or more independent variables in a regression model. In this study, the presence and extent of multicollinearity among the predictors were assessed using the Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) tool, which was calculated using the SPSS software.The VIF quantifies the degree of multicollinearity by measuring the variance inflation between the predictors. A VIF value of 1 indicates no correlation between the independent variables, implying no multicollinearity. Values greater than 1 suggest some level of correlation among the predictors. As a rule of thumb, if VIF=1 the independent variables are not correlated, if $1<\text{VIF}\leq 5$ the correlation is mediating and if VIF>5 the independent variables are highly correlated (Daoud, 2017).

Data Analysis

The collected data from the questionnaire underwent a thorough editing process to ensure consistency and completeness. Any inconsistencies or missing values were addressed before proceeding to the coding stage. The data was then transformed into numerical values, facilitating easy analysis and interpretation (Kumar, 2011). SPSS Version 25 software was utilized for data entry and analysis.

Descriptive analysis was employed to examine the quantitative data, which was then presented using tables for clear and concise interpretation. This approach allowed the researcher to identify relevant information and establish a solid foundation for comparing the study variables (Loeb et al., 2017). Furthermore, inferential statistics were applied to understand the characteristics of the study population based on the outcomes obtained from the samples (Bryman, 2016).

To assess the relationship between the dependent variable (organizational performance) and independent variables (strategic leadership), correlation analysis using the Pearson Correlation Coefficient was conducted (Schober et al., 2018). Multiple regression analysis was also employed to examine the relationships among the different variables (Sarstedt, 2014). A regression analysis was performed to test for direct effects, with the independent variables predicting the dependent variable. The regression model equation took the form:

$Y = \beta0 + \beta1X1 + \beta2X2 + \beta3X3 + \beta4X4 + \mathcal{E}$

Where;

Y= Composite index of organizational Performance (dependent variable)

$\beta0$ = constant

X_1= Composite index of strategic direction (independent variable 1)

X_2 = Composite index of resource utilization (independent variable 2)

X_3=Composite index of organization Culture (independent variable 3)

X_4= Composite index of Ethical practices (independent variable 4)

B_0, β_1, $\beta_{2,}$ β_3 = Beta Coefficients

ε = Error Term

Testing for Mediation

This involves a four-step approach according to Baron and Kenny (1986) model. The first step involved testing the direct relationship between strategic leadership and performance of Kenya airways (path A) as demonstrated in Figure 3.1

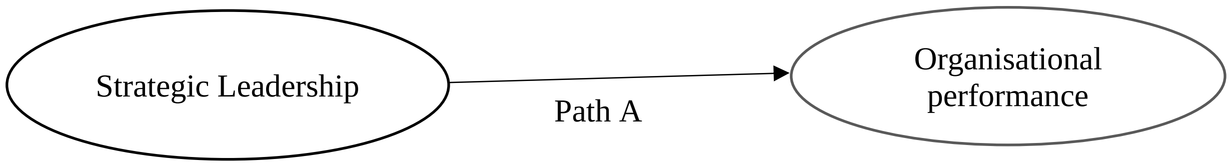

Figure 3.1: Direct Relationship between Independent and Dependent Variable

The second step entailed testing path B, followed by testing path C as the third step and lastly, the fourth step of testing path A as shown in Figure 3.2 below.

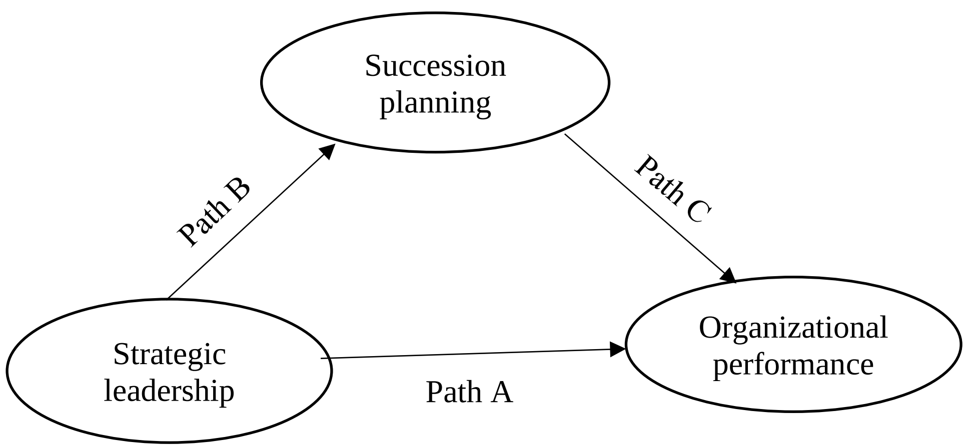

Figure 3.2: Mediating Relationship

The first step was a simple regression analysis with the independent variable predicting the dependent variable to test for significance effect, it took the form;

Organizational Performance = $\beta_0 + \beta_1$Strategy leadership + ε

$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$.

The second step was to carry out a regression analysis with the independent variable predicting the mediating variable in testing the significance of their effect, which took the form;

Succession planning = β0 + β_2Strategy leadership+ ε

$$X_4 = \beta_0 + \beta_2 X_1 + \varepsilon.$$

The third step was to carry out a regression analysis with the mediating variable predicting the dependent variable to test the significance of their effect, which took the form;

Organizational Performance = β0 + β_3 Succession planning + ε

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_3 X_4 + \varepsilon.$$

Lastly, a multiple regression analysis was done to establish if the mediating variable was a partial or full mediator, and took the form;

Organizational Performance = β0 + β_4 Strategy leadership + β_5Succession planning + ε

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_4 X_1 + \beta_5 X_4 + \varepsilon .$$

If the independent variable is not significant when the mediating variable is controlled, the finding does not support a full mediation. However, if the independent variable and mediating variable are significant the finding supports partial mediation. Since this study used a mixed method, the qualitative data was used to identify the general ideas from the participants, tone, overall impression, and credibility.

Qualitative data analysis was carried out using thematic analysis which entailed identifying themes and patterns of meaning within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). This analysis approach was most suitable since the researchers aim was to comprehend a set of thoughts, behaviors, or experiences derived from the qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The process involved reading the data carefully with the aim of identifying, analyzing and reporting repeated patterns. Braun and clarkes (2012) recommended steps namely: familiarity through immersion into the data to get a comprehensive view of the data; generation of initial codes; search for themes; review of potential themes; definition and naming of themes and reporting was used. The excepts from the interviews depicting narratives derived from the data were then infused and discussed (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations play a pivotal role in research studies, as they safeguard the dignity, well-being, and privacy of participants. Upholding ethics not only ensures the integrity of the research but also fosters trust with participants and prevents any form of misconduct or negative implications for the organization (Israel & Hay, 2006 as quoted by Creswell, 2018).

To address these ethical concerns, several measures were implemented in this study. Firstly, an approval of the study was obtained by the ethics committee of PAC university. This was used alongside an introduction letter from the University was used to apply for a research permit from the National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), a government body responsible for approval of all research in Kenya This step was taken to obtain approval and demonstrate compliance with ethical requirements.

Participant selection was conducted in a fair and justified manner, ensuring that the organization and each participant was provided informed consent (Creswell, 2018). The study also prioritized the protection of participants' privacy and confidentiality (Kumar, 2011). To maintain anonymity, each participant's identity was kept confidential, considering the sensitive nature of their responses regarding their careers, positions, and the reputation of the organization. Respecting participants' autonomy and providing clear explanations of the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits were essential aspects of obtaining informed consent. Participants were made aware of their voluntary participation, the right to withdraw at any stage, and how their data would be used anonymously.

The research permit and ethical approval obtained from NACOSTI ensured that the study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards and legal requirements. This process involved a thorough review of the study's methodology, participant protection measures, and adherence to ethical guidelines. Throughout the research process, sensitivity was maintained regarding participants' responses. The study respected the potential sensitivity of their answers, especially when discussing their careers, positions, and the reputation of the organization. This sensitivity was incorporated into the data analysis and reporting, ensuring that participants' confidentiality and privacy were upheld. By incorporating these ethical considerations, the study aimed to demonstrate a commitment to participant well-being, ethical research practices, and the protection of their rights.

Chapter Summary

A mixed methods research approach was employed to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between strategic leadership, succession planning, and organizational performance. The research design incorporated both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to gather and analyze data. For the quantitative aspect of the study, a descriptive and multiple regression analysis model was utilized. This statistical approach allowed for the examination of the variables' relationships and their impact on organizational performance. The sample size consisted of 88 participants, who represented the rest of the leadership within the organization. Prior to the main data collection, a pre-instrument test was conducted as a pilot procedure to evaluate the questionnaire's effectiveness and ensure that participants correctly interpreted the survey items.

In addition to the quantitative analysis, an open-ended interview was conducted to gather qualitative data. The participants for the interview were selected using a purposive sampling method, specifically targeting the Kenya Airways management team. This approach aimed to capture rich, in-depth insights that may have been overlooked in the quantitative study. The qualitative interviews provided additional information and perspectives that complemented the quantitative findings. To analyze the collected data, the researchers utilized the SSPS software version 25. This software facilitated the organization, manipulation, and statistical analysis of quantitative data. The results were then presented in tables, allowing for a clear and concise presentation of the findings.

Chapter Four: Results and Discussion

Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive presentation of the results and discussion that followed the analysis of the collected data to make meaningful deductions. The findings were consistent with the objectives of the study and the conceptual framework. The analysis comprised of descriptive and inferential statistics and the findings were presented using tables, graphs, and charts.

Response Rate

To begin the data analysis, the response rate was determined. The questionnaires were distributed to 88 participants with a restriction of only one submission per respondent. Of the distributed questionnaires, 75 participants responded, resulting in a response rate of 85.23% indicating a high level of success in recruiting participants for the study. Mugenda & Mugenda (2003) suggests that a response rate of 60% or more is considered satisfactory for analysis. The response rate results were as indicated in figure 4.1 below.

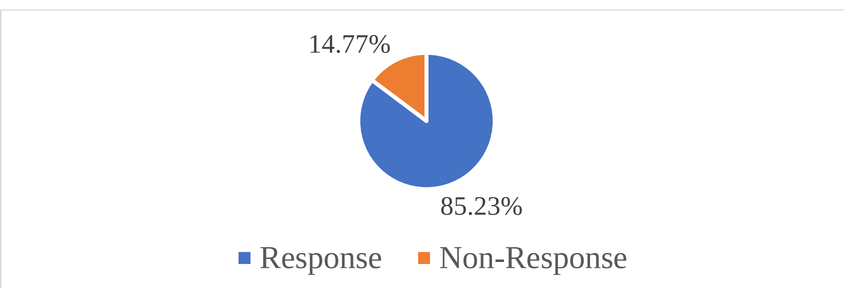

Figure 4.1: Response Rate

Demographic Characteristics

The subsections that follow provide essential information about the demographic characteristics of the respondents, including gender, management level, number of years employed by Kenya Airways, and current department. This information was important as it provided a better understanding of the composition of the sample and enabled the researcher to assess whether the sample was representative of the population under study.

Respondents Gender

The data presented in Figure 4.2 below clearly demonstrates that the study's participant composition leaned towards a higher representation of males, constituting 76% (57) of the total participants. In contrast, female participants accounted for the remaining 24% (18). This observation indicates a notable gender disparity among individuals involved in the operation and management of Kenya Airways. An important consideration is the historical trend that suggests men have displayed a greater degree of resilience and a higher inclination for risk-taking when compared to their female counterparts. These factors may contribute to the observed gender disparity, as men tend to gravitate towards sectors such as technical roles, cargo management, piloting, and information technology within the aviation industry.

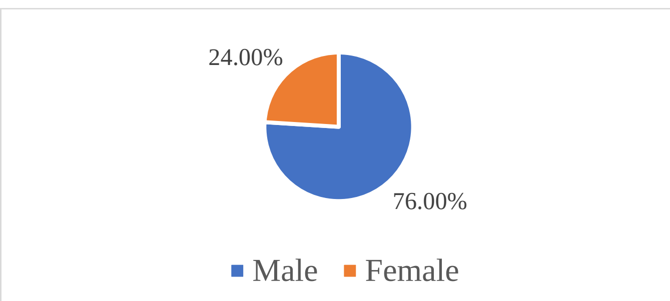

Figure 4.2: Respondents’ Gender

Management Level

The findings presented in Figure 4.3 reveal that the study's participants from Kenya Airways were primarily concentrated at the middle management level, representing the largest proportion at 44%. Following closely were department-level managers, accounting for 40% of the total participants. In contrast, senior managers constituted the smallest portion, making up only 16% of the participants.This distribution can be attributed to the specific focus and criteria of the study, which targeted top and middle-level managers who had been employed by the carrier for more than 10 years. These managers were selected due to their extensive tenure and the wealth of knowledge and information they were believed to possess. Middle managers, being in positions of operational oversight and often having a longer tenure, were likely to have accumulated a significant amount of experience and insights relevant to the study's objectives.

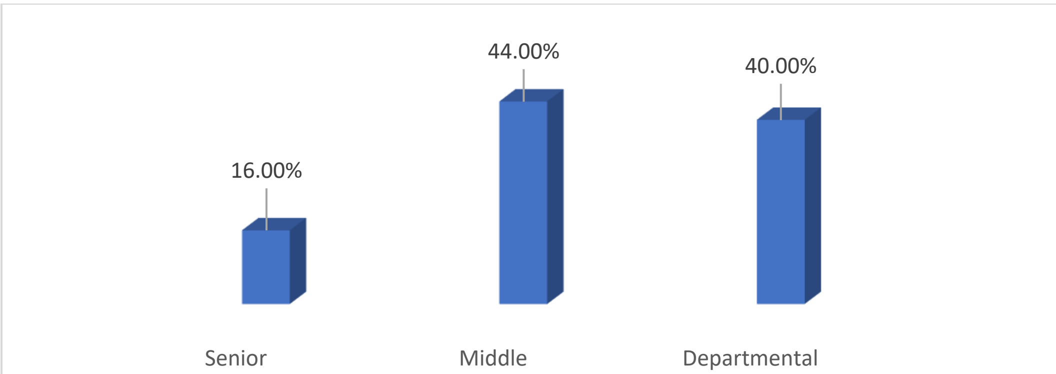

Figure 4.3: Participants Management Level

Number of Years Worked at Kenya Airways

The findings presented in Figure 4.4 highlight the distribution of participants based on their length of employment at Kenya Airways. The data shows that a significant proportion of the enumerated participants, specifically 60%, had worked at the airline for a period exceeding 15 years. Participants who had worked for a period betweent 11-15 years accounted for 25.3%, while those who had worked for a period between 5-10 years accounted for 8%. The smallest proportion was observed in participants who had worked for less than 5 years, accounting for only 6.7%.

The higher proportion of participants with over 15 years of employment was inline with the study's specific inclusion criteria, which targeted managers with extensive experience and knowledge of the airline. The study assumed that Managers who had been with the organization for a longer duration were more likely to possess a deep understanding of its operations, culture, and industry dynamics. Hence, they were selected as valuable sources of information for the study. They were also assumed to have a greater sense of loyalty and commitment to the organization.

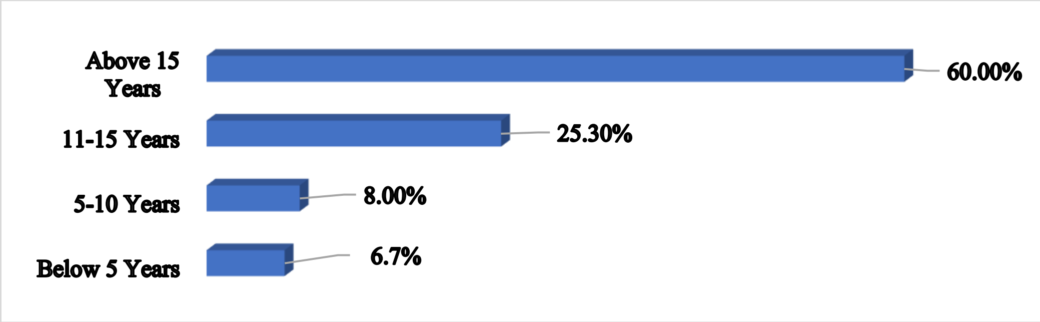

Figure 4.4: Number of Years Worked at Kenya Airways

Participants' Current Departments

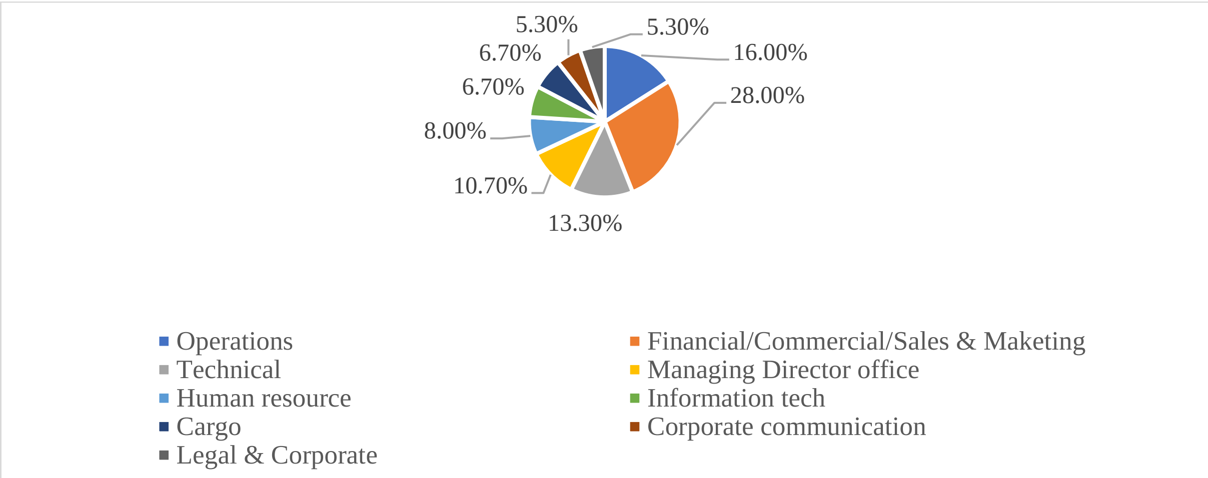

Figure 4.5: Participants' Current Departments

The findings depicted in Figure 4.5 demonstrate the distribution of study participants across different departments within Kenya Airways. The data reveals that the participation was evenly spread across various departments, indicating a diverse representation of managerial roles within the organization. The largest proportion of participants, 28%, worked in the Finance department, which includes finance, sales & marketing, and commercial functions. This suggests the significance of financial and commercial aspects in the airline industry and underscores the importance of these departments in the operations and decision-making processes of Kenya Airways. Following closely behind, was the Operations department which accounted for 16% of the participants. This indicates the involvement of managers responsible for overseeing and managing day-to-day operational activities within the airline. Given the nature of the aviation industry, ensuring efficient and smooth operations is crucial for the success of an airline.

The Technical department accounted for 13.3% of the participants, reflecting the presence of managers responsible for aircraft maintenance, engineering, and related technical operations. This emphasizes the importance of technical expertise and aircraft maintenance in the airline industry, ensuring the safety and reliability of the airline's fleet. Participants working in the Managing Director's office, Human Resources, Information Technology, and Cargo departments each accounted for 10.7%, indicating their significant involvement in the management and strategic aspects of the organization. The Corporate Communication, Legal, and Corporate Quality, Safety, and Environment departments each accounted for 4% of the participants. This suggests the inclusion of managers responsible for communication and public relations, legal affairs, as well as maintaining quality, safety, and environmental standards within the organization.

Descriptive Statistics

This section provides a thorough overview of the data set by creating summary statistics that highlight significant patterns and trends. Tables were used to present the main findings, and measures of central tendency and dispersion were used to provide a thorough overview of the data set. The findings were presented using frequency tables.

Strategic Direction

The study focused on strategic leadership as the independent variable. Within the construct of strategic leadership, the first element examined was strategic direction. This element refers to the creation of a long-term strategic vision that is aligned with the organization's strategic intent (Al Thani & Obeidat, 2020).

The study operationalized strategic direction using three elements: vision articulation, shared goals and objectives, and strategy implementation. Vision articulation focuses on effectively communicating the organization's mission and vision. Shared goals and objectives emphasize setting strategic goals that are aligned with the organization's vision and fostering a sense of collective purpose. Strategy implementation involves executing the strategic plan to achieve desired outcomes. The study aimed to understand how these elements influenced organizational performance and employee engagement. The calculated averages and standard deviations for the various aspects of strategic direction are shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics for Strategic Direction

Strategic Direction Dimensions	**Statistics**		
Vision articulation	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
Our organization has a clear vision, mission, core values and goals	75	4.23	0.559
Kenya Airways leadership have knowledge of its competitor's potential hence proactively put strategies in place	75	3.67	0.600
Kenya Airways leadership communicate stories about the success as well as failures to help promote awareness and learning	75	3.44	0.775
Sub-variable aggregate score	**75**	**3.78**	**0.645**
Shared Goals and Objectives	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**
Our organization goals are clearly aligned to specific targets that are measurable	75	4.08	0.273
Our products and services are clearly differentiated in the market	75	3.69	0.594
The strategic direction of Kenya Airways is aligned with the current market and industry trends	75	4.06	0.250
Strategies are well aligned with the goals of the organization	75	4.07	.251
Sub-variable aggregate score	**75**	**3.975**	**0.342**
Strategy Implementation	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**
There is a strategic plan in place	75	4.37	0.487
Strategic plans are fully implemented	75	3.51	0.503
Our organization often assesses its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to aid in understanding the current business climate.	75	3.85	0.651
The senior Leadership go beyond self-interest for the good of the organization	75	3.15	0.356
Sub-variable aggregate score	**75**	**3.72**	**0.499**

The dimensions of strategic direction, namely vision articulation, shared goals and objectives, and strategy implementation, were as presented in Table 4.1. Specifically, the first sub-variable, vision articulation, was assessed using three items. The aggregate mean for these items was 3.78, with a standard deviation of 0. 645.Within vision articulation, the mean score for the organization having a clear vision, mission, core values, and goals was 4.23, with a standard deviation of 0.559. This indicates that there was a relatively even spread of responses, suggesting that the organization had a well-defined and communicated vision.Regarding the organization's knowledge of its competitor's potential and proactive implementation of strategies, the mean score was 3.67, with a standard deviation of 0.6. This suggests that the organization had a moderate level of awareness and took proactive measures in response to competitors. Additionally, the mean score for the organization's leadership communicating stories about both successes and failures to promote awareness and learning was 3.44, with a standard deviation of 0.775. This indicates that the organization's leadership was moderately effective in sharing relevant stories to facilitate knowledge sharing and learning.

The second sub-variable, shared goals and objectives, was measured using four items, with an average mean of 3.975 and a standard deviation of 0.342. In terms of whether the organization's goals were clearly aligned to specific measurable targets, the mean score was 4.08, with a standard deviation of 0.273. This suggests that, on average, the organization had a strong alignment between its goals and specific measurable targets. Regarding the clarity of differentiation of the organization's products and services in the market, the mean score was 3.69, with a standard deviation of 0.594. This indicates that the organization had a moderate level of clarity in differentiating its offerings in the market. On the alignment of the organization's strategic direction with current market and industry trends, the mean score was 4.06, with a standard deviation of 0.250. This suggests that, on average, the organization had a strong alignment with market and industry trends in its strategic direction. Furthermore, in terms of the alignment of the organization's strategies with its goals, the mean score was 4.07, with a standard deviation of 0.251. This indicates that, on average, the organization's strategies were well aligned with its goals.

The third and final dimension of strategic direction is strategy implementation. It was assessed using four items, resulting in an average mean score of 3.72 and a standard deviation of 0.499. When examining whether the organization had a strategic plan in place, the mean score was 4.37, indicating a relatively high level of implementation. The standard deviation of 0.487 suggests that there was some variation in responses, but overall, the organization demonstrated a strong presence of strategic planning. In terms of the extent to which the organization's strategic plans were fully implemented, the mean score was 3.51, with a standard deviation of 0.503. This suggests that there may be some room for improvement in fully executing the strategic plans. The wider standard deviation implies a greater range of responses and varying levels of implementation across the organization.

Regarding the organization's assessment of its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) to understand the current business climate, the mean score was 3.85, with a standard deviation of 0.651. This indicates a moderate level of engagement in assessing the internal and external factors affecting the organization. The higher standard deviation suggests that there were differing perspectives and practices within the organization. When evaluating whether senior leadership went beyond self-interest for the good of the organization, the mean score was 3.15, with a standard deviation of 0.356. This suggests that there may be some room for improvement in terms of senior leadership demonstrating a selfless commitment to the organization's welfare. The lower standard deviation indicates a relatively consistent perception among respondents regarding this aspect.

These findings concur with the conclusions by Kitonga *et al.,* (2016) who resolved that there exists a good relationship between defining the strategic direction to be taken and organizational performance. Similarly, Ng'ang'a *et al.,* (2016) alluded that, the concept of strategic direction is intended for sustaining the organization's competitive advantage as well as its performance.

Resource Utilization

Resource utilization is a crucial element of strategic leadership that was examined in the study. It pertains to the effective and efficient utilization of a firm's resources to deliver high-quality services to customers and establish a competitive advantage in the market (Ahmad et al., 2020). Resources encompass both tangible and intangible assets that an organization possesses (Nwachukwu & Chladkova, 2019). Tangible resources refer to physical assets such as infrastructure, equipment, and technology, while intangible resources include intellectual property, brand reputation, and organizational culture.

In this study, resource utilization effectiveness was measured by examining the firm's ability to effectively leverage its human resources, financial resources, and physical resources. Human resources refer to the skills, knowledge, and capabilities of the organization's workforce. Financial resources include capital, funding, and financial management practices. Physical resources encompass the organization's physical assets such as buildings, equipment, and inventory. Table 4.2 presents the calculated means and standard deviations for the different aspects of resource utilization.

Table 4.2: Descriptive Statistics for Resource Utilization

Resource Utilization dimensions		Statistics	
Human Resource Capability	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**
Our organization has adequate and qualified personnel	75	3.44	0.858
Our organization is committed in enhancing its capabilities.	75	3.85	0.538
Our organization maximizes its existing resources in delivering its services and products.	75	3.15	0.766
The level of human resource utilization has a positive effect on the performance of Kenya Airways	75	4.33	0.600
Sub-variable aggregate score	**75**	**3.693**	**0.465**
Financial Resource Capability	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**
Kenya Airways budgets for all its activities	75	3.51	0.490
We have an existing asset management system	75	3.49	0.623
Our organization is committed in reducing wastage in the use of its resources	75	3.60	0.753
Sub-variable aggregate score	**75**	**3.533**	**0.622**
Physical Resource Capability	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**
Kenya Airways has invested on physical and technological infrastructure	75	3.84	0.369
Kenya Airways effectively utilizes its physical resources to achieve its business objective	75	3.44	0.500
Kenya Airways can do more to utilize its physical resources more efficiently and effectively	75	4.40	0.493
Sub-variable aggregate score	**75**	**3.893**	**0.454**

Statistics in Table 4.2 presents the calculated means and standard deviations for the different aspects of resource utilization, including human resource capability, financial resource capability, and physical resource capability. In terms of human resource capability, the four items were aggregated to yield a mean score of 3.693, with a standard deviation of 0.465. The mean score for the organization having adequate and qualified personnel was 3.44, with a low standard deviation of 0.0858, indicating a relatively consistent perception of the organization's personnel capabilities. Regarding the organization's commitment to enhancing its capabilities, the mean score was 3.85, with a standard deviation of 0.538. This suggests a moderate level of commitment to developing and improving the organization's human resources. When considering the organization's utilization of existing resources in delivering its services and products, the mean score was 3.15, with a higher standard deviation of 0.766. This indicates some variation in the perception of how effectively the organization maximizes its resources. Furthermore, the mean score for the perception that human resource utilization positively affects the performance of Kenya Airways was 4.33, with a standard deviation of 0.6. This indicates a strong consensus that effective human resource utilization contributes positively to the airline's performance.

The second dimension, financial resource capability, was assessed using three items, resulting in an average mean score of 3.533 and a standard deviation of 0.622. In terms of whether the organization budgets for all its activities, the mean score was 3.51, with a standard deviation of 0.490. This suggests a moderate level of budgeting for all activities within the organization. Regarding the existence of an asset management system within the organization, the mean score was 3.49, with a standard deviation of 0.623. This indicates a moderate perception of the presence of an asset management system to effectively manage the organization's resources. When considering the organization's commitment to reducing wastage in resource utilization, the mean score was 3.60, with a higher standard deviation of 0.753. This suggests some variation in perceptions regarding the organization's dedication to minimizing wastage.

The third dimension of resource utilization focused on financial resource capability, measured using three items. The average mean score for this dimension was 3.893, with a standard deviation of 0.454. When considering whether Kenya Airways had invested in physical and technological infrastructure, the mean score was 3.84, with a standard deviation of 0.369. This indicates a relatively high perception that the organization has made investments in infrastructure to support its operations. Regarding the effective utilization of physical resources to achieve business objectives, the mean score was 3.44, with a standard deviation of 0.5. This suggests some room for improvement in the organization's utilization of physical resources to effectively meet its objectives. Furthermore, when assessing whether Kenya Airways can do more to utilize its physical resources more efficiently and effectively, the mean score was 4.40, with a standard deviation of 0.493. This indicates a strong consensus that there is potential for the organization to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of its physical resource utilization.

These results agree with the findings by Al Amin & Maina (2020) which demonstrated that, airlines should have sufficient financial resource to support its operations, invest on technology to cope with the dynamics in this sector as well as have an effective, qualified and motivated human resource for the airlines to have a competitive advantage. Similar, conclusions were submitted by Nwachukwu & Chladkova (2019) who resolved that, there exists a significant relationship between firm's resources, its strategic capabilities and strategic performance.

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture serves as the third element of strategic leadership examined in this investigation. It is what sets a firm apart and defines its unique character (Onu et al.,2018). It influences how employees and stakeholders perceive the organization and guides their actions and decision-making processes. To measure the effectiveness of organizational culture, this study focused on three key elements: adaptability capability, shared values, and organizational climate. Adaptability capability refers to the organization's ability to respond and adapt to changes in the external environment. It assesses how well the organization embraces innovation, embraces change, and adjusts its strategies and operations accordingly. Shared values encompass the core principles and beliefs that are collectively held and shared by members of the organization. They shape the organizational culture and guide behavior and decision-making at all levels. Organizational climate refers to the overall working atmosphere and environment within the organization. It assesses factors such as employee satisfaction, engagement, collaboration, and the overall morale of the workforce. The findings from the investigation are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Descriptive Statistics for Organizational culture

Organizational culture Dimensions	**Statistics**		
Organizational Climate	***N***	***Mean***	***Std. Dev.***
Our organization provides a conducive working environment	75	4.00	0.403
We have a well-defined reward system	75	3.19	0.651
Kenya Airways has a positive and supportive organizational culture that fosters employee engagement and high performance	75	3.71	0.610
Sub-variable aggregate score	**75**	**3.633**	**0.555**
Company Values	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**
Our values are clear and lived out through consistent processes	75	3.53	0.502
We have policies and procedures that guide employee behavior	75	3.93	0.251
We strongly emphasize and concerned with employees' well-being	75	3.39	0.490
Communication to employees is clear, transparent and frequent	75	3.24	0.430
Sub-variable aggregate values	**75**	**3.523**	**0.418**
Adaptability Capability	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**
Employees are flexible and willing to adapt to changes	75	3.15	0.766
Organizational culture of Kenya Airways is unique compared to other organizations	75	3.59	0.639
Sub-variable aggregate values	**75**	**3.37**	**0.703**

Statistics in Table 4.3 represent the calculated means and standard deviations for the different dimensions of organizational culture, namely organizational climate, company values, and adaptability capability. The first dimension, organizational climate, gave an evenly distributed mean score of 3.633 and a standard deviation of 0.555. In terms of providing a conducive working environment, the mean score was 3.40, with a standard deviation of 0.403. This suggests a moderate perception of the organization's ability to create a positive and supportive working environment. Regarding the existence of a well-defined reward system, the mean score was 3.19, with a standard deviation of 0.651. This indicates some variation in perceptions regarding the clarity and effectiveness of the reward system within Kenya Airways. Furthermore, when considering whether Kenya Airways has a positive and supportive organizational culture that fosters employee engagement and high performance, the mean score was 3.71, with a standard deviation of 0.61. This indicates a relatively strong consensus that the organization has a culture that promotes employee engagement and performance.

The second dimension examined in this study was company values, which was represented by four items. The average mean score for this dimension was 3.523, with a standard deviation of 0. 418.Regarding whether the organization's values were clear and lived out through consistent processes, the mean score was 3.53, with a standard deviation of 0.502. This suggests a moderate perception that the organization effectively communicates and implements its values through consistent processes. In terms of whether the organization had policies and procedures that guide employee behaviour, the mean score was 3.93, with a lower standard deviation of 0.251. This indicates a relatively strong consensus that the organization has well-defined policies and procedures in place to guide employee behaviour. Furthermore, when considering whether the organization strongly emphasizes and is concerned with employees' well-being, the mean score was 3.49, with a standard deviation of 0.490. This suggests a moderate perception of the organization's emphasis on employee well-being.

Regarding the clarity, transparency, and frequency of communication to employees, the mean score was 3.24, with a standard deviation of 0.430. This indicates some variation in perceptions regarding the effectiveness of communication within the organization. The final organizational culture examined in this study was adaptability capability, which was assessed through two items. The average mean score for this dimension was 3.37, with a standard deviation of 0. 703.Regarding whether employees were flexible and willing to adapt to change, the mean score was 3.15, with a standard deviation of 0.766. This suggests a moderate perception of employee flexibility and adaptability within Kenya Airways. Furthermore, when considering whether the organizational culture of Kenya Airways was unique compared to other organizations, the mean score was 3.59, with a standard deviation of 0.639. This indicates a moderate perception that the organizational culture of Kenya Airways has distinct characteristics that set it apart from other organizations.

These results concur with the findings by Seidu *et al*., (2021) as well as Abubakar & Dogoji (2015) who concluded that, the organization's ability to adapt, as well as its values and employee involvement are organizational culture elements that have positive relationship with the organizational performance.

Ethical Practices

The final element of strategic leadership examined in this study was ethical practices. Ethical practices encompass the principles and guidelines that govern the interactions between employees, the organization, and external stakeholders (Mansour et al., 2020). It involves the ethical conduct of strategic leaders, such as prioritizing the interests of others over personal interests, applying justice, demonstrating respect for all individuals, and taking responsibility for their actions (Al Thani & Obeidat, 2020).

In this study, ethical practices were assessed in relation to three dimensions: integrity, transparency, and stakeholder attention. These dimensions aimed to measure the organization's adherence to ethical principles and its commitment to maintaining a responsible and ethical business environment. The statistics were according to Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Ethical Practices

Ethical Practices Dimensions		*Statistics*	
Integrity	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
We uphold and promote high level of integrity	75	3.77	0.421
Kenya Airways operates with a high level of ethical standards and practices	75	3.93	0.622
Kenya Airways maintains corporate social responsibility and sustainability practices	75	3.76	0.589
Sub-variable aggregate score	**75**	**3.82**	**0.544**
Transparency	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**
We comply to all laws and regulations	75	3.92	0.632
We are transparent and correctly publish our annual reports	75	4.09	0.470
Sub-variable aggregate score	**75**	**4.01**	**0.551**
Attention to Stakeholders	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**
Stakeholders are engaged in decision making	75	3.61	0.634
We value and consider our stakeholder’s opinion	75	3.55	0.643
Sub-variable aggregate score	**75**	**3.58**	**0.639**

The statistics in Table 4.4 above show that the ethical practices were divided into 3 dimensions. The first was integrity represented by 3 items which averaged at 3.82 and mean 0.544. When considering whether the organization upheld and promoted a high level of integrity, the mean score was 3.77, with a standard deviation of 0.421. This suggests a generally positive perception of the organization's commitment to maintaining ethical standards and behaviours.

Regarding the organization's operation with a high level of ethical standards and practices, the mean score was 3.93, with a standard deviation of 0.622. This indicates a relatively strong consensus that Kenya Airways demonstrates a commitment to upholding ethical principles in its operations. Furthermore, on the topic of maintaining corporate social responsibility and sustainability practices, the mean score was 3.76, with a standard deviation of 0.589. This suggests a moderate perception of the organization's efforts in fulfilling its social and environmental responsibilities.

The second dimension of ethical practices is transparency, which was measured using two items. The average score for this dimension was 4.01, with a standard deviation of 0.551. When examining whether the organization complied with all laws and regulations, the mean score was 3.92, with a standard deviation of 0.632. In terms of transparency and the accurate publication of annual reports, the mean score was 4.09, with a standard deviation of 0.470. These findings indicate a positive perception of Kenya Airways' commitment to compliance and transparency in its operations.

Attention to Stakeholders was the third dimension. It was measured using two items with an average score of 3.58 and a standard deviation of 0.639. This suggests a moderate level of attention given to stakeholders by Kenya Airways. The mean score for the dimension of stakeholder engagement in decision-making was 3.61, with a standard deviation of 0.634. This suggests that stakeholders are moderately involved in the decision-making processes of Kenya Airways. Regarding the organization's value and consideration of stakeholder opinions, the mean score was 3.55, with a standard deviation of 0.653. This indicates that Kenya Airways acknowledges and values the opinions of its stakeholders to some extent. This conclusion agrees with the findings by Salin *et al*., (2019) who indicated that the executive leadership have a responsibility to lead by example and exhibit good ethical leadership in order to create a positive ethical work culture within the organization.

Succession Planning

Succession planning was identified as the mediating variable in the study, serving as the link between strategic leadership and organizational performance. It refers to a deliberate and strategic process undertaken by top leadership to identify potential leaders within the organization, providing them with mentorship, and facilitating knowledge sharing for the purpose of ensuring continuity and talent retention (Saporito & Winum, 2012; Galbraith et al., 2012).

In this study, succession planning was chosen as the mediating variable due to its significant role in contributing to the overall success of an organization (Mazzei et al., 2016). It was seen as an intentional approach to ensure the continuity of leadership and the retention of valuable talent. The measurement of succession planning in this study involved four key elements: talent retention, knowledge transfer, leadership development, and leadership tenure. These elements were used to assess the effectiveness of the succession planning process and its impact on organizational performance. The findings from the investigation were as presented in

Table 4.5: Succession Planning

Succession Planning Dimensions	**Statistics**		
	N	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
There is a succession program in place	75	3.53	0.502
We encourage and support internal promotion for all positions	75	3.56	0.740
Have you identified potential replacements for yourself or other important leadership positions?	75	3.97	0.838
Leaders delegate key responsibilities to subordinates	75	3.55	0.622
We assess our human resource management and development programs	75	3.53	0.502
You encourage professional development in your juniors	75	4.07	0.475

Based on the provided data in Table 4.5, the statistics for each dimension of succession planning are as follows: Succession program in place (mean =3.53 , SD = 0.502), Internal promotional encouragement (mean =3.56, SD = 0.740), identification of potential replacement (mean = 3.97, SD = 0.838), delegation of key responsibilities (mean =3.55, SD=0.622), Assessment of HR management and development programs (mean = 3.53 , SD = 0.502), and Encouragement of professional development in juniors (mean =4.07 ,SD = 0.475).

These statistics represent the average scores and the degree of variability for each dimension of succession planning. The mean scores suggested that there was a moderate level of agreement with the presence of a succession program, encouragement of internal promotions, identification of potential replacements, delegation of key responsibilities, and assessment of HR management and development programs. Additionally, the data indicated a relatively higher level of agreement with the encouragement of professional development in juniors.

These findings were consistent with the research by Amirkhani *et al.*, (2016) who concluded that succession directly impacts organization performance through commitment and therefore organizations must be deliberate in showing commitment geared at supporting succession process for them to have a better corporate performance.

Organizational Performance of Kenya Airways

Organizational performance, as the dependent variable in this study, refers to the efficiency and effectiveness of a firm in achieving its goals and delivering valuable goods or services (Al-Qudah et al., (2020). It encompasses both financial and non-financial aspects. Financial performance was measured using approaches such as Return on Assets (ROA), Return on Equity (ROE), and market share, which provided insights into the organization's financial success. Non-financial performance was assessed through indicators like customer satisfaction, employee loyalty, and service quality, which reflected the organization's ability to meet customer expectations and maintain a motivated and loyal workforce.

By adopting this comprehensive approach to measuring organizational performance, the study aimed to capture both the financial viability and the broader aspects of success that contribute to an organization's overall performance. This approach allowed for a more holistic evaluation of the organization's effectiveness and provided a comprehensive understanding of its performance from various perspectives. The findings are according to table 4.6 below.

Table 4.6: Organizational Performance of Kenya Airways

Organizational Performance Dimensions		***Statistics***	
Return on Asset	*N*	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*
Our sales revenue has increased.	75	3.81	0.586
Sub-variable aggregate score	**75**	**3.81**	**0.586**
Return on Equity	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**
Our Profits have increased	75	3.15	0.865
Sub-variable Average Score	**75**	**3.15**	**0.865**
Market share	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**
We have gained market share through quality improvements and marketing activities	75	3.23	0.705
Sub-variable aggregate score	**75**	**3.23**	**0.705**
Customer satisfaction	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**
The customer satisfaction index has improved	75	2.63	0.632
Sub-variable aggregate score	**75**	**2.63**	**0.632**
Service Quality	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**
We are committed in providing quality service to our customers	75	4.03	0.545
Sub-variable aggregate score	**75**	**4.03**	**0.545**
Employee Loyalty	**N**	**Mean**	**0.545**
We have effective employee development programs that encourage promotion through merit.	75	3.40	0.735
We have highly motivated and loyal employees	75	3.31	0.995
Sub-variable aggregate score	**75**	**3.355**	**0.865**

Organizational performance was assessed using a combination of financial and non-financial indicators, as shown in Table 4.6. Return on assets, measured by the increase in sales revenue, had a mean of 3.81 and a standard deviation of 0.586. Return on equity, indicated by the increase in profits, had a mean of 3.15 and a standard deviation of 0.865. Though the airline was still reporting losses, the response implied that the loss had dropped from Ksh36.219 billion in 2020 to Ksh15.87 billion in 2021.Additionally, Market share, determined by the acquisition of market share through quality improvements and marketing activities, had a mean of 3.23 and a standard deviation of 0.705.

Customer satisfaction, as a non-financial performance measure, was evaluated using the improvement in the customer satisfaction index, which had a mean of 2.63 and a standard deviation of 0.632. Service quality, represented by the commitment to providing quality service to customers, had a mean of 4.03 and a standard deviation of 0. 545.Employee loyalty, another non-financial performance dimension, was assessed using two items. The first item measured the effectiveness of employee development programs that encourage promotion based on merit, with a mean of 3.40 and a standard deviation of 0.745. The second item evaluated the organization's ability to maintain highly motivated and loyal employees, with a mean of 3.31 and a standard deviation of 0.995.

These findings provide insights into the organizational performance in terms of financial indicators, customer satisfaction, service quality, and employee loyalty. However, further analysis and interpretation are required to understand the overall performance and its relationship with the other variables in the study.

In order to gain a more accurate understanding of the carrier's performance, the study delved into secondary data extracted from the carrier's website. This additional data was analyzed and presented in Figure 4.6. By mining this secondary data, the study aimed to provide a comprehensive and detailed depiction of the carrier's actual performance.

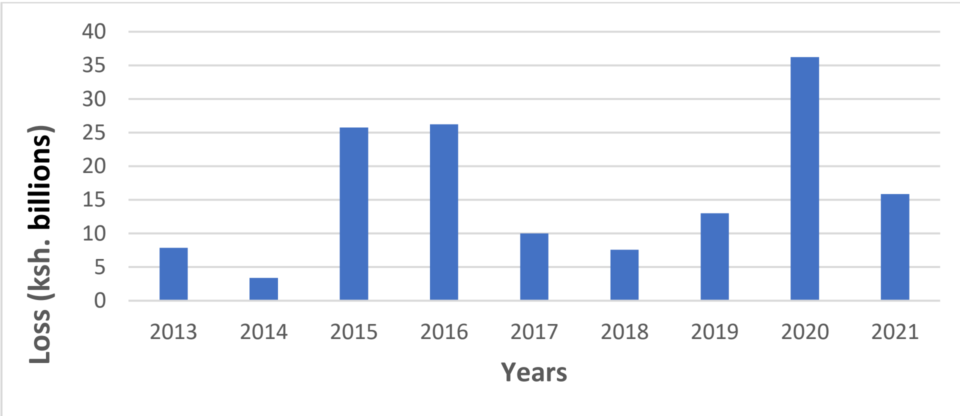

Figure 4.6: Carrier's Financial Position (2013 - 2017)

Figure 4.6 provides a clear visualization of Kenya Airways' financial performance over the nine-year period from 2013 to 2021. It is evident that the airline has faced challenges during this period, with consistent losses being reported.In particular, the year 2020 stands out as the most challenging, with the highest loss recorded. This can be attributed to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a significant negative effect on the global aviation industry. Many airlines, including Kenya Airways, faced unprecedented operational disruptions, travel restrictions, and a decline in passenger demand, resulting in substantial financial losses.

It is worth noting that in 2014, Kenya Airways showed signs of improvement, as it approached breakeven with a relatively small loss of less than 5 billion. However, the subsequent years saw a reversal of this trend, with the airline struggling to achieve profitability.These financial results highlight the difficult operating environment faced by Kenya Airways and the significant challenges it has encountered in maintaining a profitable business. It underscores the importance of understanding the factors contributing to these losses and implementing strategies to address them, including the need for effective cost management, revenue enhancement, and adaptation to changing market conditions.

Diagnostics Tests Results

Before conducting inferential analysis, the data underwent several diagnostic tests to ensure its suitability for analysis. These tests included assessing the normality of the data, examining the linearity between variables, and evaluating the presence of multicollinearity.

Normality Test

The normality of the sample distribution was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test, which assumes that data follows a normal distribution if the corresponding p-value is greater than 0.05. The results, depicted in Figure 4.7, revealed that the p-values for the variables Strategic Direction, Resource Utilization, Organizational Culture, Ethical Practices, Succession planning, and Organizational Performance were 0.069, 0.093, 0.536, 0.237, 0.890, and 0.972, respectively. All these p-values exceeded the significance threshold of 0.05. Consequently, it was concluded that the sample data exhibited approximate normality. These findings align with a study conducted by Razali et al. (2012), which emphasizes that a sample is considered to follow a normal distribution if its Shapiro-Wilk p-value is greater than 0.05.

Table 4.7: Normality Tests

	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Strategic Direction	1.987	75	.069
Resource Utilization	1.666	75	.093
Organizational Culture	0.433	75	.536
Ethical Practices	0.355	75	.237
Succession Planning	0.159	75	.890
Organizational Performance	2.696	75	.972

Linearity test

Pearson correlation analysis was utilized to examine the linearity between the dependent variable, organizational performance, and each independent variable individually. The findings from Table 4.8 revealed significant linear associations between strategic direction and organizational performance ($p = 0.009$), as well as between resource utilization and organizational performance ($p < 0.001$). Additionally, statistically significant linear associations were observed between organizational culture, ethical practices, and succession planning, with p-values less than 0.05 for all variables. These results are consistent with the findings of a prior study conducted by Verma & Abdel-Salam (2019), which support the existence of a linear relationship between variables when the significance value is below 0.05. Consequently, these findings provide further evidence regarding the impact of these independent variables on organizational performance.

Table 4.8: Results of Pearson's Correlation Linearity Test

		Organizational Performance	**Conclusion**
Strategic Direction	Pearson Correlation	.204	Linear
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.009	
	N	75	
Resource Utilization	Pearson Correlation	.481**	Linear
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	75	
Organizational Culture	Pearson Correlation	.299**	Linear
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	
	N	75	
Ethical Practices	Pearson Correlation	.392**	Linear
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	75	
Succession Planning	Pearson Correlation	.705**	Linear
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	75	

** Strategic Leadership = (strategic direction * resource utilization * organization culture * ethical practices) P less than 0.05**and less than 0.000***

Multicollinearity Test

To assess the level of multicollinearity among the independent variables, Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were calculated for each variable, as presented in Table 4.9. The VIFs for strategic direction, resource utilization, organizational culture, ethical practices, and succession planning were 1.563, 4.012, 2.699, 4.939, and 1.513 respectively. Clearly, there was some degree of correlation observed among all the independent variables, but the VIF values remained below the acceptable threshold of $1<VIF\leq5$ hence a conclusion that though multicollinearity was present, it wasn't severe. These findings are consistent with a study by Daoud (2017), which suggests that a VIF value exceeding 5 indicates the presence of severe multicollinearity.

Table 7.9: Multi-Collinearity Test Results

Model Variable	**Collinearity Statistics**		
	Tolerance	**VIF**	**Decision**
(Constant)			
Strategic Direction	.640	1.563	No multicollinearity
Resource Utilization	.249	4.012	No multicollinearity
Organizational Culture	.371	2.699	No multicollinearity
Ethical Practices	.202	4.939	No multicollinearity
Succession Planning	.661	1.513	No multicollinearity

** Interaction = (Z score: Strategic leadership * Z score: Succession Planning)

** Strategic Leadership = (strategic direction * resource utilization * organization culture * ethical practices)

Inferential Statistics

Regression analysis was used to investigate the type and strength of the relationship between the variables under consideration.

Test of Hypothesis

A multivariate linear regression model was used in the study to assess the influence of characteristics within the independent variable, strategic leadership. Specifically, strategic direction, resource utilization, organizational culture, and ethical practices were examined for their impact on Kenya Airways' organizational performance. Cooper and Schindler (2011) reinforced the usefulness of multiple linear regression for research with several independent variables, making it an appropriate choice for this investigation.

In the study, five hypotheses were investigated. The first four hypotheses looked at how Kenya Airways' organizational performance was directly impacted by strategic direction, resource utilization, organizational culture, and ethical behavior. The fifth hypothesis explored the mediating role of succession planning in the relationship between strategic leadership and organizational performance. The study also sought to ascertain the extent to which the predictor variables explained variation in Kenya Airways performance. In addition, model significance was determined using an ANOVA test, as recommended by Mokaya (2013), by computing F statistics and accompanying p-values. To test if the model was eligible for additional statistical analysis, a significance level of 0.05 was chosen.

Following the determination of the model significance, the predictor variable coefficients were computed. The effects of strategic leadership (strategic direction, resource utilization, organizational culture, and ethical practices) on Kenya Airways' organizational performance are shown in Table 4.10. This table provides information on each predictor variable's coefficient estimates, standard errors, t-values, and p-values.

Table 4.10: Strategic Leadership and Organizational Performance

Model Summary

Model	R	R Squared	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the estimate
1	**0.484**	0.234	.191	.34610

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.566	4	.641	5.354	.001[b]
	Residual	8.385	70	.120		
	Total	10.951	74			

Regression Coefficients

Model	**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	**T**	**Sig.**
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.891	.762		1.169	.007
Strategic Direction	.160	.159	.144	.376	.042
Resource Utilization	.592	.252	.482	2.350	.002
Organizational Culture	.231	.202	.192	.411	.033
Ethical Practices	.072	.195	.052	.243	.049

The outcomes displayed in Table 4.10 provide insights into the model fit, indicating how well the model equation aligned with the data. The correlation coefficient (R) was observed to be 0.484, indicating a moderate positive correlation between the independent variables and dependent variable (organizational performance). In terms of predictive power, the coefficient of determination (R2) was calculated to be 0.234, indicating that 23.4% of the variation in organizational performance can be explained by strategic direction, resource utilization, organizational culture, and ethical practices. The remaining 76.6% of the variation in organizational performance is attributed to factors not included in the model.

Additionally, the analysis of variance (ANOVA) for strategic leadership and organizational performance was conducted. The computed F statistic was 5.354, and its corresponding p-value was 0.001. These results indicate that the regression relationship was statistically significant in predicting how strategic direction, resource utilization, organizational culture, and ethical practices impact the organizational performance of Kenya Airways.

The regression model, as presented in Table 4.10, provides insights into the relationship between the dependent variable (organizational performance) and the independent variables (strategic direction, resource utilization, organizational culture, and ethical practices). It can be expressed as:

$$\mathbf{Y = 0.891 + 0.160X_1 + 0.592X_2 + 0.231X_3 + 0.072X_4 + \varepsilon}$$

Where:

Y = Dependent Variable (Organizational performance)

X_1 = Strategic Direction

X_2 = Resource Utilization

X_3 = Organizational Culture

X_4 = Ethical Practices

ε **=** error term

From the regression model the constant term of 0.891 represent the predicted value of the dependent variable when independent variables are equal to zero. The symbol ε represents any additional independent variables that may have been included in the model but are not specifically mentioned in the equation. The model further revealed that strategic direction had a positive and statistically significant impact on organizational performance (p-value = 0.042).

Additionally, resource utilization also was revealed to have a positive and statistically significant impact on organizational performance (p-value = 0.002). Regarding organizational culture, it was revealed to have a positive and statistically significant impact on organizational performance (p-value = 0.033). Moreover, ethical practices showed a positive and highly significant impact on organizational performance (p-value = 0.049).

Effect of Strategic Direction on Organizational performance of Kenya Airways

The first objective of the study was to determine the effect of strategic direction on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways. The corresponding null hypothesis stated that strategic direction has no significant effect on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways. The results presented in Table 4.10 indicate a standardized beta coefficient of $\beta=0.144$ and a p-value of 0.042. Since the p-value was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that strategic direction has a significant positive effect on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways.

Based on the findings, the study rejected the null hypothesis that strategic direction has no significant effect on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways and concluded that strategic direction indeed has a significant positive impact on the organizational performance of the airline.

This finding aligns with a study conducted by Kitonga et al., (2016), which also identified a positive relationship between strategic direction and organizational performance. Furthermore, it closely corresponds to the conclusions drawn by Ng'ang'a et al., (2016), who found that strategic direction significantly influences the organizational performance of tourism agencies. These studies collectively highlight the importance of establishing a clear strategic direction to enhance organizational performance and achieve desired outcomes. However, it's important to note that the regression analysis does not establish causality, meaning that strategic direction alone does not cause changes in organizational performance. The observed relationship suggests that changes in strategic direction are associated with changes in organizational performance.

Effects of Resource Utilization on Organizational Performance of Kenya airways

The study's second objective was to assess how resource utilization affected Kenya Airways' organizational performance. The corresponding null hypothesis stated that resource utilization had no significant effect on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways. According to the findings shown in Table 4.10, the standardized beta coefficient was equal to 0.482, and the p-value was 0.002. The null hypothesis was disproved since the p-value was less than 0.05. This suggests that Kenya Airways' organizational performance is significantly improved by resource utilization.

The study shows that resource utilization does, in fact, have a significant positive effect on airline performance, rejecting the null hypothesis that it has no significant impact on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways.

The finding closely aligns with the conclusions drawn by Nwachukwu & Chladkova, (2019), who found that efficient utilization and allocation of resources can significantly contribute to better strategic performance. However, it is important to note that this is also contingent upon having a flexible and strong organizational structure. A well-designed and adaptable structure allows for effective coordination, communication, and decision-making processes, enabling the organization to align its resources and strategic direction more effectively. Like the previous finding, the regression analysis does not imply a causal relationship. It indicates that increases in resource utilization tend to be related to improvements in organizational performance.

Effects of Organizational culture on Organizational Performance of Kenya airways

The study's third objective was to establish the impact of organizational culture on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways. The corresponding null hypothesis stated that organizational culture had no significant effect on the organizational performance of the airline. The results presented in Table 4.10 indicate a standardized beta coefficient of $\beta=0.192$ and a p-value of 0.033. Since the p-value was below the significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates that organizational culture has a significant positive effect on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways.

Based on these findings, the study rejected the null hypothesis that organizational culture has no significant effect on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways and concluded that organizational culture indeed has a significant positive impact on the airline's performance.

This finding aligns with a study conducted by Mibey, (2018), which indicated that organizational culture notably influences an airline's performance. The relationship suggests that a stronger organizational culture is associated with better organizational performance.

Effects of Ethical Practices on Organizational Performance of Kenya airways

The fourth objective of the study aimed at examining the effect of ethical practices on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways. The null hypothesis for this objective stated that ethical practices have no significant effect on the airline's performance. The results shown in Table 4.10 reveal a standardized beta coefficient of $\beta=0.052$ and a p-value of 0.049. As the p-value was lower than the significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that ethical practices have a significant positive effect on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways.

The finding aligns with the conclusions drawn by Dwi Widyani et al., (2020), who concluded in their study that ethical practices can improve the performance of financial institutions in Bali province. The finding is closely related to the study conducted by Salin et al., (2019), which established that the leader's ethical commitment has a significant and positive relationship with the company's performance. The regression analysis does not imply that ethical practices directly cause improvements in organizational performance. Instead, it suggests that there is an association between ethical practices and higher levels of organizational performance.

Mediating role of Succession Planning on the Relationship between Strategic Leadership and Organizational Performance of Kenya Airways

The fifth objective of this study was to establish the mediating role of succession planning in the relationship between strategic leadership and the organizational performance of Kenya Airways. The corresponding null hypothesis (Ho_5) stated that succession planning has no significant mediating role in this relationship. To test this hypothesis, the study employed Baron and Kenny's (1986) four-step approach for testing mediating effects. The hypotheses were evaluated through the following four steps.

Step 1. The first step involved testing the direct relationship between strategic leadership and performance of Kenya airways.

Table 4.11: Strategic Leadership and Organizational Performance

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Squared	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the estimate
1	.449[a]	.202	.191	.34604

ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	2.210	1	2.210	18.454	.000[b]
Residual	8.741	73	.120		
Total	10.951	74			

Regression Coefficients

Model	**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	**T**	**Sig.**
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.832	.591		1.409	.163
Strategic Leadership	.678	.158	.449	4.296	.000

Table 4.11 presents the findings regarding the regression of organizational performance on strategic leadership. The coefficient of determination, R Square (R2), was calculated to be 0.202, indicating that strategic leadership can account for 20.2% of the variation in Kenya Airways' organizational performance. The remaining 79.8% of the variation is attributed to factors other than strategic leadership. The regression relationship between organizational performance and strategic leadership was found to be statistically significant, with a probability (P) value of 0.000, which is less than the significance level of 0.05. Therefore, the study concluded that strategic leadership is a significant predictor of organizational performance for Kenya Airways.

Furthermore, the standardized beta coefficient was determined to be 0.499, with a corresponding p-value of 0.000. Since the p-value is lower than the significance level, strategic leadership was found to be a significant predictor of organizational performance.

The model was simplistically expressed as:

$$\mathbf{Y = 0.832 + 0.678X_1 + \mathcal{E}}$$

Where:

Y = Dependent Variable (Organizational performance)

X_1 = Strategic leadership

Ɛ = error term

Step 2. The second step was to carry out a regression analysis with the independent variable predicting the mediating variable in testing the significance of their effect.

Table 4.12: Strategic leadership on Succession Planning

Model Summary

Model	R	R Squared	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the estimate
1	.283[a]	.080	.068	.40299

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.033	1	1.033	6.363	.014[b]
	Residual	11.855	73	.162		
	Total	12.889	74			

Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Unstandardized Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.969	.688		2.862	.005
	Strategic Leadership	.464	.184	.283	2.523	.014

a. Dependent Variable: Succession Planning

The results presented in Table 4.12 reveal a coefficient of determination, R square, of 0.080, indicating that strategic leadership accounts for 8.0% of the variations in succession planning. To determine the significance of the model, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted, resulting in a significance level of 0.014 and an F-statistic of 6.363. Since the p-value is below the significance level of 0.05, it can be concluded that the model is statistically significant in predicting succession planning. The standardized coefficient for strategic leadership was calculated to be 0.283, with a p-value of 0.014. Based on these results, it can be concluded that strategic leadership is a significant predictor of succession planning, as the p-value is less than the significance level. The model was expressed as:

$$\mathbf{Y = 1.969 + 0.464X_1 + \mathcal{E}}$$

Where:

Y = Dependent Variable (Succession planning)

X_1 = Strategic leadership

Ɛ = error term

Step 3. The third step was to carry out a regression analysis with the mediating variable predicting the dependent variable to test the significance of their effect.

Table 4.13: Succession Planning on Organizational Performance

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.705[a]	.497	.490	.27467

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5.443	1	5.443	72.155	.000[b]
	Residual	5.507	73	.075		
	Total	10.951	74			

Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.959	.285		3.368	.001
	Succession Planning	.650	.077	.705	8.494	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance

The results presented in Table 4.13 indicate a coefficient of determination, R square, of 0.497. This means that succession planning can predict 49.7% of the variations in the organizational performance of Kenya Airways. Additionally, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine the significance of the model. The results show an F-statistic of 72.155, and the corresponding p-value for the model was 0.000. Since the p-value was less than the significance level of 0.05, it was concluded that succession planning has a significant impact on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways.

The standardized coefficient for succession planning was determined to be 8.494, with a p-value of 0.000. Based on these results, it was concluded that succession planning is a significant predictor of organizational performance for Kenya Airways at a 95% confidence level, as the p-value is lower than the significance level. The model was expressed as:

$Y = 0.959 + 0.650X_1 + \varepsilon$

Where:

Y = Dependent Variable (Organization performance)
X_1 = Succession planning
ε = error term

Step 4. A multiple regression analysis was done to establish if the mediating variable was a partial or full mediator.

Table 4.14: Organizational Performance, Strategic Leadership and Succession Planning

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.752[a]	.565	.553	.25728

ANOVA					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	6.185	2	3.092	46.720	.000[b]
Residual	4.766	72	.066		
Total	10.951	74			

Regression Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	-.308	.463		-.665	.508
Succession Planning	.579	.075	.628	7.750	.000
Strategic Leadership	.409	.122	.271	3.347	.001

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance

The statistics in Table 4.14, shows an adjusted R square of 0.553 which means that both Strategic and succession planning were able to predict 55.3 % of the variations in organizational performance of Kenya Airways. The results of the ANOVA show a significance level of 0.000 which is less than the P-value of 0.05 implying that the model was significant in prediction.

Finally, the results showed a standardized beta coefficient of 0.628 for succession planning and 0.271 for strategic leadership. The regression model was summarized as:

$$\mathbf{Y = -0.308 + 0.579X_1 + 0.409X_1 + \mathcal{E}}$$

Where:

Y = Dependent Variable (Organization performance)

X_1 = Succession planning

X_2 = Strategic leadership

Ɛ = error term

Table 4.15: Summary of the Regression Results for Mediating Effect

Parameters	**Step 1**	**Step 2**	**Step 3**	**Step 4**	**Change**	**Decision**
R squared	0.202	0.08	0.497	0.565	0.363	Succession planning
Adjusted R^2	0.191	0.068	0.490	0.553	0.362	has a partial mediating
F-value	18.454	6.363	72.155	46.720	28.266	effect on the
β_0 Constant	0.832	1.969	0.959	-0.308	-1.14	relationship between
Strategic leadership	0.449	0.283		0.271	-0.178	strategic leadership
Succession planning			0.705	0.628	-0.077	and organizational
						performance

The summarized regression results reveal a noteworthy relationship between strategic leadership and the organizational performance of Kenya Airways. When assessing the impact of strategic leadership on organizational performance, a moderate to strong positive correlation was observed, with a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.449, a coefficient of determination (R Square) of 0.202, and a beta coefficient of 0.0449, all statistically significant at a p-value of 0.000.

Upon introducing succession planning as a mediating variable, certain changes in the model were observed. The beta coefficient of strategic leadership decreased by 0.178 to 0.271, while R Square increased by 0.363 to 0.565. Similarly, the beta coefficient of succession planning decreased by 0.077 from 0.705 to 0.628. Additionally, the constant term decreased by 1.14 units from 0.832 to -0.308. These adjustments suggest that the influence of strategic leadership on the dependent variable diminishes as the overall explanatory power of the model improves.

The evaluation of mediation followed the prescribed criteria by Baron and Kenny (1986). In this study, the criteria for mediation were satisfied. The initial step, regressing organizational performance on strategic leadership, revealed a significant relationship ($p < 0.001$). Subsequently, the regression of succession planning on strategic leadership yielded a significant result ($p < 0.05$). Moreover, regressing organizational performance on succession planning resulted in a significant relationship ($p < 0.001$). Finally, in the fourth step, while the constant term was not significant ($p > 0.05$), the relationship between strategic leadership and organizational performance remained significant ($p < 0.05$).

Based on these summarized statistical findings, it can be concluded that succession planning plays a partial mediating role in the relationship between strategic leadership and the organizational performance of Kenya Airways. Hence, the strength of the association between strategic leadership and organizational performance is contingent upon the extent to which succession planning is derived from the resources deployed through strategic leadership.

The above findings are consistent with the principles of the resource-based view (RBV) theory. The RBV theory emphasizes the role of firm-specific resources and capabilities in creating a sustainable competitive advantage and improving organizational performance. In this study, the positive and significant impact of resource utilization on organizational performance aligns with the RBV perspective. Efficient allocation and utilization of resources are considered valuable and rare resources that can contribute to a competitive advantage and improved performance.

Similarly, the positive and significant impact of strategic leadership on organizational performance supports the RBV theory. Strategic leadership involves the development and deployment of strategic resources and capabilities, which are key determinants of a firm's performance and competitive advantage according to the RBV perspective. The finding that succession planning has a positive and significant impact on organizational performance is also consistent with the RBV theory. Succession planning ensures the availability of human resources and talent within the organization, which can be considered as a resource that is valuable and difficult to imitate.

Additionally, the findings of the study are also consistent with the principles of Upper Echelons Theory which suggests that the characteristics, values, and experiences of top executives, as well as their cognitive frames, influence organizational outcomes. The study's finding that strategic leadership has a positive significant impact on organizational performance aligns with Upper Echelons Theory. According to this theory, the strategic decisions, and actions of top executives, who are considered part of the upper echelons of an organization, significantly impact the organization's performance. Strategic leadership, as demonstrated in the study, indicates that the characteristics and actions of top executives have a substantial influence on organizational outcomes. These findings are also consistent with the conclusions drawn by Onu et al. (2018), who similarly found a robust relationship between strategic leadership and performance. The results emphasize the importance of effective strategic leadership in driving the overall success and performance of Kenya Airways. This finding also aligns with strategic leadership theory, which emphasizes the crucial role of leaders in setting a clear strategic direction, making strategic decisions, and aligning the organization's resources and capabilities towards achieving organizational goals and objectives.

Furthermore, the finding that succession planning has a positive and highly significant impact on organizational performance is also consistent with path-goal theory. Succession planning is related to the selection and development of future top executives, which is a critical aspect of path-goal theory. Effective succession planning ensures that competent and capable individuals are prepared to take on leadership roles, which can positively affect organizational performance.

Summary on the Test of Hypotheses

The test results for each of the study's five hypotheses are summarized in this part, along with the decisions that were made in response to the data. Table 4.16 presents the findings.

Table 4.16 Summary of the Test Results for the Study Hypotheses

Hypothesis	**Findings**	**Decision**	**Conclusion**
Strategic direction has no significant effect on organizational performance of Kenya Airways	$P = 0.042 < 0.05$	Reject $H0_1$	Strategic direction indeed has a significant positive impact on the organizational performance of the airline.
Effective resource utilization has no significant effect on organizational performance of Kenya Airways	$P = 0.002 < 0.05$	Reject $H0_2$	Effective resource utilization has a significant effect on organizational performance of Kenya Airways
Organizational culture has no significant effect on organizational performance of Kenya Airways	$P = 0.033 < 0.05$	Reject $H0_3$	Organizational culture has a significant effect on organizational performance of Kenya Airways
Ethical practices has no significant effect on organizational performance of Kenya Airways	$P = 0.049 < 0.05$	Reject $H0_4$	Ethical practices has a significant effect on organizational performance of Kenya Airways
Succession planning had no significant mediating role on the relationship between strategic leadership and organizational performance of Kenya Airways	$P = 0.001 < 0.05$	Reject $H0_5$	Succession planning has a partial significant mediating role on the relationship between strategic leadership and organizational performance of Kenya Airways

Analysis of the Qualitative Data

In this study, thematic content analysis was employed to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' responses and to extract meaningful themes that captured the key ideas and concepts expressed by them. Through a rigorous process of data coding and analysis, the researcher identified and derived four distinct themes from the data. These themes represented overarching topics or concepts that were consistently present in the participants' responses. (Braun & Clarke, 2012) They provided a way to categorize and organize the data, allowing for a more structured and comprehensive understanding of the participants' viewpoints.

Theme one: Strategic Direction and Organizational performance

Participants were asked about; what specific strategies were working well for Kenya Airways in terms of aligning its goals with the organization's objectives and whether there were areas that needed improvement citing examples. Senior manager 003 stated:

> *The carrier's mission is to contribute to the sustainable development of Africa. It has focused on establishing a strong presence in Africa, considering it as its competitive edge due to its extensive knowledge of the African market, which surpasses that of its competitors. The carrier has expanded to numerous destinations, although not as extensively as Ethiopian Airlines. Approximately 65% of its operations are concentrated within Africa. Our goal is to become the pride of Africa and the preferred airline for African travellers. The move is seen as a strategy well aligned to one of the many carriers' objectives.*

This strategic direction was perceived as being well-aligned with Kenya Airways' objectives. The participants also mentioned that the strategy on expansion to specific international destinations, such as New York, Europe, the Middle East, India, and China was viewed as a successful approach in line with the organization's goals. They however highlighted the need to evaluate the equipment used for transportation, particularly in terms of addressing limitations in carrying luggage for trader traffic from a Dreamliner to a narrow body aircraft that had resulted to customer dissatisfaction. Senior manager 001 reiterated that:

> *Another successful strategy is expansion to specific international destinations (New York, Europe, Middle East, India, and China). However, one area that requires improvement is the evaluation of operating equipment, particularly considering the limitations in carrying luggage for trader traffic from a Dreamliner to a narrow body aircraft that results to customer dissatisfaction."*

The participants were also asked their perception on the whether the leadership of Kenya Airways had knowledge of its competitors' potential and proactively implemented strategies. Most of the respondents perceived that Kenya Airways was not adequately competing with Ethiopian Airlines (ET), which was seen to have a larger network and fleet. ET was however, believed to receive substantial government support and operated within a system that included various supporting entities. In contrast, Kenya Airways was perceived to be facing competition from its own airport authority, which posed challenges for its competitiveness. Senior Manager 001 shared the following insights:

> *Our primary competitor that has consistently been mentioned is Ethiopian Airlines (ET), both in terms of their network and aircraft fleet. Kenya Airways (KQ) is not putting forth sufficient efforts to effectively compete with Ethiopian Airlines, which boasts a larger network and fleet. Ethiopian Airlines is believed to receive substantial government support and operates as a cohesive system with various supporting entities. In contrast, Kenya Airways, including the airport authority, is perceived to be almost competing with its own national carrier. Moreover, a*

significant number of leaders within Kenya Airways lack understanding of Ethiopian Airlines' operations and the overall competitive environment surrounding it. While the leaders in Kenya Airways have some information about their competitors, they lack a comprehensive understanding of the specific threats posed by them. It is worth noting that the competitive landscape is observed to be evolving primarily from a regulatory standpoint rather than from a broader macro perspective."

Participants were asked to share their perspectives on how Kenya Airways could enhance its strategic direction to align with prevailing market and industry trends, along with providing specific recommendations for improvement. Majority of the participants put forward suggestions for diversifying into additional revenue streams, including cargo services, expanding ground handling services to other locations, utilizing Fahari Aviation for innovative products, and prioritizing efforts to enhance the customer experience. These suggestions aim to establish Kenya Airways as the leading African carrier. They also emphasized the significance of strengthening liquidity, addressing debt, and seeking strategic investments or government support to effectively implement the strategic plan. They seemed to suggest the need to ensure financial stability, enhance competitiveness, and align with the evolving market and industry dynamics. They equally noted that financial challenges hindered the airline's ability to acquire new aircraft, open new routes, and explore growth opportunities and recommended that Kenya Airways should focus on strengthening its financial position through measures such as debt restructuring, seeking investment partnerships, and implementing efficient cost management strategies.

Many of the participants also emphasized the importance of garnering support from government-related agencies. Collaborating closely with relevant government bodies can help address regulatory hurdles, secure favorable policies, and obtain necessary support for the airline's strategic initiatives. This includes engaging in meaningful dialogue and building strong relationships with government stakeholders such as Kenya Airport Authority (KAA) and Kenya Civil Aviation Authority (KCAA) to foster a conducive environment for growth.

Theme Two: Resource Utilization and Organizational Performance

The participants were asked to give their views on how the asset management system and budgeting can be improved to better support all activities at Kenya Airways. And what specific factors contribute to the effectiveness of these systems. A majority of them indicated that it is important for the airline to have an effective asset management system that provides up-to-date data on assets, their utilization, and maintenance costs. This would enable the airline to make informed decisions and optimize resource allocation. Specific factors that were identified as contributing to the effectiveness of these systems include addressing issues related to resource overload, ensuring proper utilization of assets, and implementing robust maintenance practices. By addressing these factors, inefficiencies and increased costs can be minimized, leading to improved overall performance and cost-effectiveness for Kenya Airways.

Theme three: Organizational Culture and Organizational performance

The respondents were asked to cite the specific barriers to effectively communicating stories about successes and failures within Kenya Airways, as well as potential strategies to overcome them. In their response, a majority of the participants reported that Kenya Airways had a weak corporate communication and marketing departments, which hampers their ability to effectively convey their story. They indicated that this weakness was manifested in various ways such as inadequate response to social media platforms and a failure to engage with opinion shapers and influencers who have the ability to amplify their message. These communication barriers prevented the airline from effectively showcasing its achievements and addressing any negative narratives that may arise.

Most of the participants proposed strategies to overcome these barriers, which included reinforcing the corporate communication and marketing departments within Kenya Airways. They recommended providing these departments with the required resources, expertise, and strategies to effectively communicate the airline's achievements and address any shortcomings. This may involve investing in skilled personnel, implementing comprehensive social media strategies, and actively engaging with influencers and opinion leaders to cultivate positive narratives.

Most participants emphasized the importance of timely response and correction of erroneous narratives. By promptly addressing any misinformation or negative perceptions, Kenya Airways can proactively manage its reputation and ensure accurate information is disseminated. This should involve closely monitoring social media platforms, engaging in proactive communication, and leveraging appropriate channels to clarify any misconceptions.

Theme Four: Ethical practices and Organizational Performance

Participants were asked to provide specific examples of factors that led to the perception that the senior leadership of Kenya Airways prioritized their own self-interest over the organization's best interests when developing strategies. In their response, majority of the participant perceived that new leaders had strategies that did not go well with the airline capability in addition some of the leaders brought in their own acquaintances which raised concerns about, whether their decisions were motivated by self-interest rather than the best interests of the organization. For example, Senior manager 01 stated that:

"There have been significant top leadership changes in the organization over the last ten years, dating back to Titus Naikuni's era. Some decisions may not have been made in the best interest of the carrier, such as the Mawingu project, which did not turn out as anticipated. For example, the management pursued a big expansion drive, intending to replace all their aircraft

at once, but this plan did not achieve the intended objective. As a result, the carrier ended up with a lot of debts and expensive assets that have derailed its progress over the years. Many people believe the procurement was driven by selfish interests, rather than a genuine desire to improve the carrier."

Senior manager 02 reiterated that:

"Whenever the carrier's leadership has changed over the years, they have brought in their own consultants and hired their own acquaintances. This has led to a perception that any subsequent decisions may not be made in the best interest of the carrier. The introduction of outsiders' broke trust within departments and further contributed to the perception that decisions were not aligned with the company's best interest." He further added that, "*The issue revolves around certain crucial decisions that have been made, which have failed to effectively propel the company's growth in terms of expansion, senior-level recruitments, and investments."*

The participants were also asked to share their insights on the factors contributing to the perception of indifference regarding the sufficiency and competence of personnel at Kenya Airways, as well as provide specific examples where improvements were necessary. The findings suggested that there was a predominant perception that external hires may have been selected based on personal connections rather than merit and this was perceived to have an impact on the competence of the personnel. Participants recommended that a balanced approach that combined staff development of internal staff and the development of new talent through training, mentoring, and coaching would effectively address this issue to enhance the organizational capacity at Kenya Airways.

Most of the participants also perceived those delays in implementing signed service charters was an additional challenge in the airline. They recommended that Kenya Airways should prioritize the timely execution of service agreements, honoring commitments made to customers and partners. They suggested that this should entail effective project management, clear communication channels, and proactive coordination to ensure smooth implementation of agreed-upon initiatives.

Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter serves to provide a concise overview of the key discoveries in line with the stated objectives. It examines the findings, draws conclusions, and offers suggestions for future research. Additionally, it highlights crucial areas that warrant additional investigation.

The main objective of the study was to investigate the mediating role of succession planning in the relationship between strategic leadership and the performance of Kenya Airways FTo achieve this, the study examined the direct relationship between four components of strategic leadership (strategic direction, resource utilization, organizational culture, and ethical practices) and the organizational performance of Kenya Airways. Additionally, the study explored the mediating role of succession planning in the relationship between strategic leadership and organizational performance. The study drew on various theoretical frameworks including the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, Strategic Leadership theory, Upper Echelon theory, and Path-Goal Leadership theory. By adopting a pragmatic philosophical worldview, the study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-method research design. The target population consisted of 112 top and middle management team of Kenya Airways, and a sample size of 88 participants was determined using proportional stratified sampling and purposive sampling techniques.

Summary of the Findings

The study encompassed five specific objectives each addressing a distinct subject by developing related hypotheses. Multiple linear regression analysis was used in inferential data analysis to investigate these objectives. This method enabled a thorough analysis of the connections between variables and offered insightful information regarding the research objectives.

The data analysis for the study began by determining the response rate, which was found to be 85.23%. This high response rate indicates a successful recruitment of participants for the study. According to Mugenda & Mugenda (2003), a response rate of 60% or higher is considered satisfactory for analysis. In terms of participant composition, the study predominantly consisted of male participants, making up 76% of the total participants. Female participants accounted for the remaining 24%. Regarding the participants' organizational positions, the majority (44%) held middle management positions, followed closely by department-level managers (40%). Senior managers represented the smallest proportion, comprising only 16% of the total participants.

A significant proportion (60%) of the participants had worked at Kenya Airways for over 15 years, indicating a high level of experience and tenure. Participants with work experience between 11-15 years accounted for 25.3%, while those with a period between 5-10 years represented 8%. The smallest proportion was observed in participants with less than 5 years of work experience, accounting for only 6.7%. The study's participation was evenly distributed across various departments. The largest percentage (28%) of participants worked in the Finance department, which includes finance, sales & marketing, and commercial roles. Operations accounted for 16% of participants, while Technical represented 13.3%. Participants working in the Managing Director's office, Human Resources, Information Technology, and Cargo departments each accounted for 10.7%, and the Legal, Corporate Communication, and Corporate Quality, Safety, and Environment departments each accounted for 4% of the participants.

Effect of Strategic Direction on Organizational performance of Kenya Airways

The first objective of the study was to determine the effect of strategic direction on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways and the corresponding null hypothesis stated that strategic direction has no significant effect on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways.

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were generated to answer the objective and test the hypothesis.

Descriptive statistical analysis of the strategic direction in Kenya Airways indicated a strong performance. The dimension of vision articulation received a high average mean score of 4.23 (SD = 0.559), suggesting that the organization effectively communicated a clear vision, mission, core values, and goals. The assessment of the organization's knowledge of competitors and proactive implementation of strategies yielded a mean score of 3.67 (SD = 0.6), indicating a moderate level of awareness and proactive measures. However, the mean score for leadership's communication of relevant stories about successes and failures was 3.44 (SD = 0.775), suggesting a moderate effectiveness in promoting knowledge sharing and learning.

In terms of shared goals and objectives, the organization demonstrated strong alignment with specific measurable targets, as reflected by a mean score of 4.08 (SD = 0.273). The clarity of differentiation in the market received a mean score of 3.69 (SD = 0.594), indicating a moderate level of clarity. The alignment of strategic direction with market and industry trends received a high mean score of 4.06 (SD = 0.250), suggesting strong synchronization. The alignment of strategies with goals also scored well, with a mean score of 4.07 (SD = 0.251).

Regarding strategy implementation, the organization exhibited a robust presence of strategic planning, as evidenced by a mean score of 4.37 (SD = 0.487). However, the extent of fully implementing strategic plans received a slightly lower mean score of 3.51 (SD = 0.503), suggesting some room for improvement. The assessment of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) yielded a mean score of 3.85 (SD = 0.651), indicating a moderate level of engagement. The evaluation of senior leadership's selfless commitment to the organization received a mean score of 3.15 (SD = 0.356), suggesting potential for improvement in this area.

From the inferential statistics, a standardized beta coefficient of $\beta=0.144$ and a p-value of 0.042 were revealed from the regression model. Since the p-value was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implied that strategic direction had a significant positive effect on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways. The hypotheses/objective of the study expanded the current understanding in the field of Strategic Direction by offering empirical evidence that enhances the existing findings regarding the impact of strategic direction on organizational performance. Previous research conducted within the Kenyan context primarily focused on sectors other than aviation, such as non-profit organizations. In contrast, this study specifically concentrated on the aviation sector, with Kenya Airways as the primary subject of investigation.

Effects of Resource Utilization on Organizational Performance of Kenya Airways

The second objective of the study aimed to assess the effect of resource utilization on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways. To address this objective, both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to examine the relationship between resource utilization and organizational performance. The corresponding null hypothesis stated that resource utilization does not have a significant effect on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways. By analyzing the data using appropriate statistical techniques, the study sought to provide empirical evidence to either support or reject the null hypothesis and gain insights into the influence of resource utilization on the airline's performance.

Descriptive statistical analysis of resource utilization in Kenya Airways provided valuable insights into human resource capability, financial resource capability, and physical resource capability. These dimensions were assessed using various items, and their means and standard deviations were calculated to understand the perceptions and effectiveness of resource utilization within the organization.

In terms of human resource capability, the organization received an average mean score of 3.693 (SD = 0.465). The perception of having adequate and qualified personnel scored relatively well, with a mean score of 3.44 and a low standard deviation of 0.0858, indicating consistent views among respondents. The commitment to enhancing human resource capabilities showed a mean score of 3.85 (SD = 0.538), suggesting a moderate level of dedication to developing and improving the organization's workforce. However, the utilization of existing resources in delivering services and products exhibited some variation, with a mean score of 3.15 (SD = 0.766). On the other hand, there was a strong consensus that effective human resource utilization positively impacts the performance of Kenya Airways, as reflected in the mean score of 4.33 (SD = 0.6).

The dimension of financial resource capability yielded an average mean score of 3.533 (SD = 0.622). The organization's budgeting for all activities scored moderately, with a mean score of 3.51 (SD = 0.490). The existence of an asset management system received a similar score, with a mean of 3.49 (SD = 0.623), indicating a moderate perception of effective resource management. However, the commitment to reducing wastage in resource utilization exhibited some variation, with a mean score of 3.60 (SD = 0.753).

Regarding physical resource capability, the average mean score was 3.893 (SD = 0.454). The organization's investment in physical and technological infrastructure scored relatively high, with a mean score of 3.84 (SD = 0.369), indicating a perception of substantial investments in supporting operations. However, the effective utilization of physical resources to achieve business objectives had room for improvement, scoring a mean of 3.44 (SD = 0.5). Additionally, there was strong consensus that Kenya Airways can further enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of its physical resource utilization, as reflected in the mean score of 4.40 (SD = 0.493).

The results of the inferential statistical analysis showed a standardized beta coefficient of 0.482 and a corresponding p-value of 0.002. Since the p-value was less than the predetermined significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that resource utilization had a significant positive effect on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways. The findings suggest that by effectively utilizing their resources, Kenya Airways was able to enhance its overall performance.

The findings of this study contribute to the existing knowledge on the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory by providing empirical evidence that reinforces the notion that effective utilization of resources can significantly influence overall organizational performance. Additionally, this study addresses the gap identified in a previous research conducted on public organizations in the UAE,the study suggested that financial resources were the significant resource impacting the social performance sector, contrary to the RBV theory's emphasis on human resources. However, this study fills the gap by presenting empirical evidence within the aviation sector, indicating that human resources, along with financial and physical resources, play a crucial role in organizational performance.

Effects of organizational culture on Organizational Performance of Kenya Airways

The third objective of the study focused on examining the influence of organizational culture on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways. The objective was addressed through the generation of both descriptive and inferential statistics. The corresponding null hypothesis stated that organizational culture does not have a significant effect on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways. Through the utilization of suitable statistical techniques, the study aimed to analyze the data and provide empirical evidence to either support or reject the null hypothesis. By doing so, the study aimed to gain insights on the impact of organizational culture on the performance of Kenya Airways.

The study examined the dimensions of organizational culture, including organizational climate, company values, and adaptability capability, within Kenya Airways. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate the means and standard deviations for each dimension, providing insights into the organization's culture. In terms of organizational climate, the mean score for providing a conducive working environment was 3.40, indicating a moderate perception of the organization's ability to create a positive and supportive workplace. The existence of a well-defined reward system received a mean score of 3.19, suggesting some variation in perceptions regarding its clarity and effectiveness. However, the mean score of 3.71 for a positive and supportive organizational culture indicated a relatively strong consensus that Kenya Airways fosters employee engagement and high performance.

Examining company values, the mean score for clear and lived-out values through consistent processes was 3.53, indicating a moderate perception of effective communication and implementation of values. The organization's policies and procedures guiding employee behavior received a mean score of 3.93, reflecting a strong consensus on the presence of well-defined guidelines. The mean score of 3.49 for emphasizing employee well-being suggested a moderate perception of the organization's focus on employee welfare. However, there was some variation in perceptions regarding the clarity, transparency, and frequency of communication to employees, with a mean score of 3.24.

Regarding adaptability capability, the mean score for employee flexibility and willingness to adapt to change was 3.15, suggesting a moderate perception of adaptability within Kenya Airways. The mean score of 3.59 for the uniqueness of the organizational culture compared to other organizations indicates a moderate perception of distinct cultural characteristics. Inferential statistical analysis results revealed a standardized beta coefficient of β=0.192 and a p-value of 0.033. Since the p-value was less than the predetermined significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis stating that organizational culture has no significant effect on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways was rejected.

The hypotheses/objective of the study enhanced the current understanding of organizational culture by offering empirical evidence that complements the existing findings on the influence of organizational culture on performance. Previous studies conducted in the aviation sector, particularly focusing on airlines such as Virgin Atlantic, British Airways, Easyjet, and Ryanair in the United Kingdom, relied on secondary data. However, the use of secondary data posed challenges in generalizing the findings. This study addressed this gap by utilizing primary data and employing a mixed-method research approach, which provided a more comprehensive understanding of Kenya Airways' culture and its impact on performance.

Effects of Ethical Practices on Organizational Performance of Kenya Airways

The study's fourth objective was to examine the effect of ethical practices on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways. Through the utilization of suitable statistical techniques, both descriptive and inferential statistics were generated to address this objective. The corresponding null hypothesis stated that ethical practices have no significant effect on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways. The study aimed to analyze the data using appropriate statistical methods in order to provide empirical evidence that either supports or rejects the null hypothesis.

The descriptive statistical analysis conducted on ethical practices in Kenya Airways yielded valuable insights into three dimensions: integrity, transparency, and attention to stakeholders. These dimensions were assessed through means and standard deviations to gain an understanding of how ethical practices were perceived within the organization.In terms of integrity, the organization received positive ratings, with a mean score of 3.82 and a standard deviation of 0.544. This indicates that Kenya Airways is perceived to uphold and promote a high level of integrity, demonstrating a commitment to ethical standards and behaviors. Additionally, the organization was found to operate with a strong adherence to ethical standards, as reflected by a mean score of 3.93 and a standard deviation of 0.622. Moreover, Kenya Airways was moderately perceived to fulfill its corporate social responsibility and sustainability practices, with a mean score of 3.76 and a standard deviation of 0.589.

The dimension of transparency received favorable ratings, with an average score of 4.01 and a standard deviation of 0.551. This suggests that Kenya Airways is perceived to comply with laws and regulations and demonstrates transparency in the accurate publication of its annual reports. Specifically, the organization scored a mean of 3.92 with a standard deviation of 0.632 for compliance with laws and regulations, and a mean of 4.09 with a standard deviation of 0.470 for transparency in annual reporting.

Regarding attention to stakeholders, the organization received a moderate rating, with an average score of 3.58 and a standard deviation of 0.639. Stakeholders were moderately involved in the decision-making processes of Kenya Airways, as indicated by a mean score of 3.61 and a standard deviation of 0.634. Furthermore, the organization was found to acknowledge and value stakeholder opinions to some extent, with a mean score of 3.55 and a standard deviation of 0.653. Inferential statistical analysis revealed a standardized beta coefficient of $\beta=0.052$ and a p-value of 0.049. As the p-value was lower than the significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implied that ethical practices had a significant positive effect on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways.

The hypotheses/objective of the study contributed to the existing knowledge in ethical practice by presenting empirical evidence that enhances the understanding of the impact of ethical practices on organizational performance. Moreover, while previous studies have examined various sectors worldwide, this study specifically focused on the aviation sector, with a particular emphasis on Kenya Airways. Therefore, the findings of this study can serve as a valuable reference for generalization and application within the aviation sector.

Mediating Role of Succession Planning on the Relationship between Strategic Leadership and Organizational Performance of Kenya Airways

The fifth objective of this study was to establish the mediating role of succession planning in the relationship between strategic leadership and the organizational performance of Kenya Airways. The corresponding null hypothesis (Ho_5) stated that succession planning has no significant mediating role in this relationship. To test this hypothesis, the study employed Baron and Kenny's (1986) four-step approach for testing mediating effects. The hypotheses were evaluated through the following four steps.

Descriptive statistical analysis provided insights into the different dimensions of succession planning within Kenya Airways. The mean scores and standard deviations were calculated for each dimension, reflecting the average scores and the variability of responses. In terms of the succession program in place, the mean score was 3.53, with a standard deviation of 0.502. This suggested a moderate level of agreement regarding the existence of a succession program within the organization. Similarly, for internal promotional encouragement, the mean score was 3.56, with a slightly higher standard deviation of 0.740. This indicates a moderate level of agreement with the organization's efforts to encourage internal promotions.

The dimension of identification of potential replacements had a higher mean score of 3.97, with a standard deviation of 0.838. This indicates a relatively strong consensus regarding the organization's ability to identify potential candidates for key positions. Additionally, for the delegation of key responsibilities, the mean score was 3.55, with a standard deviation of 0.622, suggesting a moderate level of agreement with the organization's practice of delegating important tasks.

The assessment of HR management and development programs received a mean score of 3.53, with a standard deviation of 0.502, indicating a moderate level of agreement with the organization's evaluation of these programs. Lastly, the dimension of encouragement of professional development in juniors had a higher mean score of 4.07, with a relatively lower standard deviation of 0.475. This suggests a stronger consensus and higher agreement with the organization's efforts to support the professional growth of junior employees. Inferential statistical analysis employing the four-step approach for testing mediating effect revealed that succession planning played a partial mediating role in the relationship between strategic leadership and the organizational performance of Kenya Airways.

The findings of this study make a valuable contribution to the existing knowledge on the path-goal theory by providing empirical evidence that suggests leaders can effectively support and guide their subordinates towards achieving desired goals by implementing specific actions, such as succession planning, to sustain performance. Additionally, previous research conducted in the aviation sector did not explore the mediating role of succession planning in the relationship between strategic leadership and the performance of Kenya Airways. This study addresses this gap and enhances knowledge in the field of strategic leadership. Specifically, the hypotheses in this study addressed the identified gap by demonstrating that when leaders are able to identify and mentor their followers along the path of leadership, organizations can achieve sustained performance.

Conclusion

Strategic leadership has the potential to improve the performance of Kenya Airways by developing and aligning its strategies with the organizational goals, optimizing resource utilization, and cultivating a positive organizational culture that can enable the airline to proactively respond and adapt to emerging changes in the aviation sector. Moreover, upholding ethical practices that promote transparency and integrity is essential while continuously monitoring and evaluation its performance for effectiveness and success in a dynamic market environment.

In addition, Strategic leadership and succession planning have the potential to significantly enhance the performance of Kenya Airways. This is because ,succession planning provides valuable opportunities for staff training, leadership development, and knowledge transfer. This will enable a seamless transition of leadership and authority from one individual to another while ensuring the airline's resilience and stability in the face of contingencies. Moreover, by implementing effective succession planning strategies, Kenya Airways can maintain a strong leadership pipeline, foster continuous growth, and sustain success in the long run. By following these principles, Kenya Airways can effectively navigate challenges, enhance its operations, and achieve sustainable growth.

Several conclusions can be derived from the statistical findings. Based on the study of the objective aimed at determining the effect of strategic direction on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways, several conclusions can be drawn. Kenya Airways was revealed to have a strong foundation in terms of strategic direction, with clear vision articulation, goal alignment, and strategic planning. However, opportunities for improvement were identified in areas such as knowledge sharing, complete implementation of strategic plans, and senior leadership's selfless commitment to the organization.

The objective that sought to assess the effect of resource utilization on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways, the findings suggested that Kenya Airways had a favorable perception of human resource capability, with a strong belief in the positive impact of effective utilization. The organization also exhibited moderate levels of financial resource capability, including budgeting and asset management, while recognizing opportunities for reducing wastage. The investment in physical and technological infrastructure was perceived positive, although a room for improvement in their effective utilization was pointed out.

Regarding the objective aimed at examining the influence of organizational culture on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways, the findings revealed that the organization had a positive and supportive climate, and emphasized on company values, and demonstrated moderate adaptability. The objective that sought to examine the effect of ethical practices on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways, revealed a strong commitment to maintaining ethical standards and behaviors. The organization demonstrated integrity, transparency, and attention to stakeholders, indicating a positive perception of its ethical practices. The carrier was also perceived to uphold and promote a high level of integrity, operated with ethical standards, and prioritized corporate social responsibility and sustainability practices. Additionally, the organization was seen as transparent in complying with laws and regulations and publishing accurate annual reports. The involvement of stakeholders in decision-making processes was also acknowledged.

Lastly, the objective that sought to establish the mediating role of succession planning in the relationship between strategic leadership and the organizational performance of Kenya Airways, the findings indicated a moderate level of agreement in various aspects of succession planning within Kenya Airways. The organization appeared to have implemented a succession program, encouraged internal promotions, identified potential replacements, delegated key responsibilities, and assessed HR management and development programs. Additionally, there was a relatively higher level of agreement with the organization's focus on the professional development of junior employees.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations can be made to enhance the organizational performance of Kenya Airways. To strengthen its strategic direction and position itself as the premier African carrier, Kenya Airways should prioritize aligning its strategies with organizational goals. This entails diversifying revenue streams through the expansion of cargo operations and ground handling services to other locations. Additionally, addressing challenges such as liquidity constraints and weak customer service should be a priority. By improving service quality and leveraging Fahari Aviation for innovative products, the airline can enhance the overall customer experience and differentiate itself in the market. These strategic initiatives will contribute to Kenya Airways' growth, profitability, and reputation as a leading airline in Africa.

Secondly, Kenya Airways should focus on enhancing resource utilization practices. This involves regularly assessing and optimizing the adequacy and competence of its personnel, as well as improving the existing asset management systems and budgeting processes. By maximizing the effective utilization of its resources, the company can improve operational efficiency and overall performance.

Thirdly, fostering a positive organizational culture is essential. Kenya Airways should establish a well-defined reward system to recognize and incentivize employees' contributions. Moreover, the company should demonstrate a greater concern for employee well-being, promote transparent communication, and encourage employee adaptability to change. These initiatives can contribute to higher levels of employee satisfaction, engagement, and ultimately improve organizational performance.

Fourthly, upholding ethical practices is crucial for Kenya Airways. The company should continue to prioritize and promote a high level of integrity, compliance with laws and regulations, transparency, and ethical standards in its operations. Additionally, engaging stakeholders in decision-making processes and considering their opinions can contribute to a more inclusive and responsible approach.

Fifthly, enhancing succession planning is important for the long-term success of the organization. Kenya Airways should provide support for internal promotion across all positions and ensure that key responsibilities are effectively delegated. The company should also assess and enhance its human resource management and development programs, as well as encourage professional development opportunities for employees. Identifying and grooming potential successors for important leadership positions will help ensure continuity and effective leadership.

Lastly, it is recommended that Kenya Airways continuously monitors and evaluates its performance in relation to the identified factors. This can be achieved through regular feedback mechanisms from employees, customers, and other stakeholders. By actively seeking feedback and making necessary adjustments, the company can continuously improve its strategies and practices to enhance organizational performance.

Key Contribution of the Study to Knowledge

The findings of the study contribute to our understanding of various aspects related to organizational performance in the context of Kenya Airways. Firstly, they contribute by highlighting the importance of strategic direction and its impact on organizational performance. The study emphasizes the significance of clear vision articulation, goal alignment, and effective strategic planning in driving organizational success.

Secondly, the findings contribute to the understanding of resource utilization and its role in organizational performance. They underscore the importance of effectively utilizing human, financial, and infrastructural resources to maximize performance outcomes. The study identifies areas of strength and areas for improvement in resource utilization within Kenya Airways, providing valuable insights for enhancing efficiency and effectiveness.Furthermore, the study contributes to the understanding of organizational culture and its impact on performance. It reveals the positive influence of a supportive and positive organizational climate, strong company values, and adaptability on organizational performance. These findings highlight the significance of cultivating a culture that fosters employee engagement, collaboration, and high performance.

Additionally, the study contributes to the knowledge of ethical practices and their effect on organizational performance. It underscores the importance of maintaining integrity, transparency, and stakeholder engagement in enhancing performance outcomes. The findings provide evidence of Kenya Airways' commitment to ethical practices and highlight areas of strength in ethical behavior and corporate social responsibility.

Lastly, the study contributes to the literature on succession planning and its mediating role between strategic leadership and organizational performance. It demonstrates the importance of implementing a comprehensive succession program, encouraging internal promotions, and identifying potential replacements. The findings highlight the positive impact of succession planning on organizational performance and provide insights into its mediating effect.

Overall, the findings of this study contribute valuable knowledge and insights into the factors influencing organizational performance, specifically in the context of Kenya Airways. They have practical implications for improving strategic direction, resource utilization, organizational culture, ethical practices, and succession planning in the aviation industry and beyond.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Based on the findings and limitations of the current study, there are several suggestions for further research that can contribute to the existing knowledge and provide valuable insights into the organizational performance of Kenya Airways:

a) Future study should investigate the impact of different leadership styles and practices on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways. Explore the leadership behaviors, traits, and strategies that contribute to effective performance outcomes and employee engagement. Additionally, examine the role of leadership in driving change and innovation within the organization.

b) Further research could explore the factors that motivate and engage employees at Kenya Airways and their influence on organizational performance. This should include an investigation of rewards and recognition programs, career development opportunities, and work-life balance initiatives within the organization to understanding how a motivated and engaged workforce can be fostered to improve performance outcomes.

c) There is need to investigate the impact of customer experience and satisfaction on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways. Analyze customer feedback, conduct surveys, and assess customer loyalty to understand the drivers of satisfaction and their influence on business performance. Additionally, explore strategies to enhance the customer experience and build strong customer relationships.

d) research should also explore the organization's ability to manage change and adapt to external disruptions. Investigate the strategies, processes, and capabilities that contribute to organizational resilience in the face of challenges such as industry disruptions, economic fluctuations, and global crises. Understanding how Kenya Airways effectively navigates change can provide valuable insights for other organizations.

e) Investigate the integration of sustainable practices and their impact on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways. Explore initiatives related to environmental responsibility, social impact, and corporate sustainability. Assess the influence of sustainable practices on brand reputation, stakeholder relationships, and financial performance.

f) Future research is needed to investigate the organizational performance of Kenya Airways in international markets. This should explore the challenges and opportunities presented by global expansion, changing customer preferences, and competitive landscapes. Investigate strategies for market entry, brand positioning, and customer acquisition in different international contexts.

g) Technology adoption and digital transformation: Investigate the adoption and impact of emerging technologies on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways. Explore the role of technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data analytics, and automation in improving operational efficiency, customer service, and decision-making processes.

h) Explore the role of strategic partnerships and alliances in enhancing the organizational performance of Kenya Airways. Investigate the benefits, challenges, and success factors associated with collaborative initiatives with other airlines, suppliers, or industry stakeholders.

Chapter Summary

A summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations have been covered in this chapter. The recommendations for policy and practice have been highlighted and areas for future research articulated.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Questionnaire

This questionnaire is intended to collect data on the mediating role of succession planning on the relationship between strategic leadership and organizational performance of Kenya airways as part of a master's program in Organizational Leadership degree course. Please take a few minutes to answer the below questionnaire. In this study, you are not obligated to disclose your identity, similarly, the information provided will be handled with high level confidence and will only be utilized for academic purposes. Additionally, no payments will be done to participants for taking part in the study.

SECTION A: GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Gender

   a) Male [ ]

   b) Female [ ]

2. Management Level

   a) Senior level [ ]

   b) Middle level [ ]

   c) Departmental [ ]

3. Number of years worked in Kenya Airways

   a) Below 5 yrs. [ ]

   b) 5-10 yrs. [ ]

   c) 11- 15 yrs. [ ]

   d) Above 15 yrs. [ ]

4. Current department

a) Operations [ ]

b) Finance [ ]

c) Technical [ ]

d) Managing Director Office [ ]

e) Commercial [ ]

f) Human Resource [ ]

g) Sales and Marketing [ ]

h) Cargo [ ]

i) Information Technology [ ]

j) Corporate Communication [ ]

k) Legal Office [ ]

l) Corporate quality, safety and environment [ ]

SECTION B: Strategic Direction

This section intends to get information to establish the extent to which your organization has developed its short and long term plans and effectively communicated the organization's mission to the employees to help them understand the organization's overall direction. Please indicate by ticking in the appropriate box, how you agree or disagree with the statements below

5. How familiar are you with the strategic direction of Kenya Airways?

a) Not at all familiar [ ]

b) Not very familiar [ ]

c) Somewhat familiar [ ]

d) Very familiar [ ]

1 – Not at All, 2 –Slightly Extent, 3 – Moderate Extent, 4 – High Extent, 5 – Very High extent

	Strategic Direction	Not at All	Slightly Extent	Moderate Extent	High Extent	Very High Extent
6.	Our company has a clear vision, mission, core values and goals					
7.	Our company goals are clearly aligned to specific targets that are measurable					
8.	There is a strategic plan in place					
9.	Strategic plans are fully implemented					
10.	Our organization often assess its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to aid in understanding the current business climate					
11.	Our products and services are clearly differentiated in their market					
12.	The strategic direction of Kenya Airways is aligned with the current market and industry trends.					
13.	The senior leadership go beyond self-interest for the good of the organisation					
14.	Strategies are well aligned with the goals of the organisation					
15.	Kenya Airways leadership have knowledge of its competitor's potential hence proactively put strategies in place					
16.	Kenya Airways leadership communicate stories about the success as well as failures to help promote awareness and learning					

Put any other comments here …………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………………….

SECTION C: Resource utilization.

This section seeks to obtain information on how your organization utilizes its resources to effectively deliver quality services to its customers and create a competitive advantage. Please check the box which best describes your agreement or disagreement on each of the following statements. The measurement is as follows; (1) not at all, (2) slightly extent, (3) moderate extent, (4) high extent, and (5) very high extent.

	Resource Utilization	Not at All	Slight Extent	Moderate Extent	High Extent	Very high Extent
17.	Our organization has adequate and qualified personnel					
18.	Kenya Airways budgets for all its activities					
19.	We have an existing asset management system					
20.	Kenya Airways has invested on physical and technological infrastructure					
21	Our organization maximizes its existing resources in delivering its services and product					
22.	Our organisation is committed in enhancing its capabilities					
23.	Our organization is committed in reducing wastage in the use of its resources					
24.	Kenya Airways effectively utilizes its physical resources to achieve its business objectives					
25.	Kenya Airways can do more to utilize its physical resources more efficiently and effectively					
26.	The level of human resource utilization has a positive effect on the performance of Kenya Airways.					

Put any other comments here ……………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………………….

SECTION E: Organizational culture.

This section seeks to get information on how your organization's culture governs your interaction with your internal as well as its external environment. Please check the box which best describes your agreement or disagreement on each of the following statements. The measurement is as follows; (1) not at all, (2) slightly extent, (3) moderate extent, (4) high extent, and (5) very high extent.

	Organizational culture	Not at All	Slightly Extent	Moderate Extent	High Extent	Very High Extent
27.	Our organization provides a conducive working environment					
28.	We have a well defined reward system					
29.	Our values are clear and lived out through consistent processes					
30.	We have policies and procedures that guide employee behaviour					
31.	We strongly emphasise and concerned with employees' well-being					
32	Communication to employees is clear, transparent and frequent					
33	Employees are flexible and willing to adapt to changes					
34	Kenya Airways has a positive and supportive organizational culture that fosters employee engagement and high performance					
35	The organizational culture of Kenya Airways is unique compared to other organizations					

Put any other comments here ……………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………………….

SECTION E: Ethical Practices.

This section seeks to get information on the extent to which your organization promotes ethical practices. Please check the box which best describes your agreement or disagreement on each of the following statements. The measurement is as follows; (1) not at all, (2) slightly extent, (3) moderate extent, (4) high extent, and (5) very high extent.

	Ethical practices	Not at All	Slightly Extent	Moderate extent	High Extent	Very High Extent
36.	We uphold and promote high level of integrity					
37.	We comply to all laws and regulations					
38.	Stakeholders are engaged in decision making					
39.	We value and consider our stakeholder’s opinion					
40.	We are transparent and correctly publish our annual reports					
41.	Kenya Airways operates with a high level of ethical standards and practices					
42.	Kenya Airways maintains corporate social responsibility and sustainability practices					

Put any other comments here ………………………………………………………………………..

SECTION F: Succession Planning

This section seeks to obtain information on how your organization’s promotes knowledge transfer for leadership continuity and talent retention. Please check the box which best describes your agreement or disagreement on each of the following statements. The measurement is as follows; (1) not at all, (2) slightly extent, (3) moderate extent, (4) high extent, and (5) very high extent.

	Succession Planning	Not at all	Slightly extent	Moderate Extent	High extent	Very high extent
43.	There is a succession program in place					
44.	We encourage and support internal promotion for all positions					
45.	Have you identified potential replacements for yourself or other important leadership positions?					
46.	Leaders delegate key responsibilities to subordinates					
47.	We assess our human resource management and development programs					
48.	You encourage professional development in your juniors					

Put any other comments here …………………………………………………………………..

SECTION G: Organizational Performance

This section seeks to get information on how your organization has realized its set goals overtime. Please check the box which best describes your agreement or disagreement on each of the following statements. The measurement is as follows; (1) not at all, (2) slightly extent, (3) moderate extent, (4) high extent, and (5) very high extent.

	Organizational performance	Not at All	Slightly Extent	Moderate Extent	High Extent	Very high Extent
49.	Our sales revenue has increased.					
50.	Our Profits have increased					

51.	We have gained market share through quality improvements and marketing activities					
52	The customer satisfaction index has improved					
53.	We are committed in providing quality service to our customers					
54.	We have effective employee development programmes that encourage promotion through merit.					
55	We have highly motivated and loyal employees					

Put any other comments here ……………………………………………………………………..

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SECTION II: Qualitative Part

1. What specific factors contribute to the perception of respondents that the senior leadership of Kenya Airways acts in the best interests of the organization rather than their own self-interest? Can you provide examples of instances where the leadership demonstrated this behavior?

2. What specific strategies are working well for Kenya Airways in terms of aligning its goals with the organization's objectives? Are there areas that need improvement? Can you provide examples?

3. Why do some respondents’ express indifference towards whether the leadership of Kenya Airways has knowledge of its competitors' potential and proactively put strategies in place? What factors influence their views on this issue?

4. What are the specific barriers to effective communication of stories about successes and failures within Kenya Airways? How can these barriers be overcome?

5. How can Kenya Airways further improve its strategic direction to remain in line with

current market and industry trends? Can you provide specific recommendations for improvement?

6. What specific challenges have hindered the comprehensive implementation of Kenya Airways' strategic plan? How can these challenges be addressed?

7. What factors contribute to the perception of respondents regarding the sufficiency and competence of personnel at Kenya Airways? Can you provide examples of areas where improvements are needed.

8. How can the asset management system and budgeting be improved to better support all activities at Kenya Airways? What specific factors contribute to the effectiveness of these systems?

Appendix II: Letter of Introduction

Victoria Mutungi

To whom it may concern,

RE; Request to participate in a research study

I am a PAC University student undertaking postgraduate course in leadership. As part of my course, I am carrying out research on "The mediating role of succession planning on the relationship between strategic leadership and organizational performance of Kenya Airways"**.** The study outcome of the study is expected to benefit the airline industry, not only in Kenya, but also across the African region and in extension the management of other organizations that provide service.

Your contribution by participating in responding to the questionnaire will greatly be appreciated. All responses received will be used only for the purpose of this study and treated with utmost confidentiality.

Your support and cooperation will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

Victoria Mutungi

MALD/16638/0/2020

Appendix V: Research authorization and Ethics Clearance Letter

PAN AFRICA CHRISTIAN
PAC
UNIVERSITY

P.O. Box 56875 - 00200
Nairobi, Kenya
Lumumba Drive, Roysambu
off Kamiti Rd, off Thika Rd
Tel: 0734 400694/0721 932050
Email: enquiries@pacuniversity.ac.ke
website: www.pacuniversity.ac.ke

4TH MAY, 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION & ETHICS CLEARANCE LETTER FOR MUTUNGI VICTORIA REG. NO: MALD/16638/0/20

Greetings! This is an introductory letter for the above named person a final year student at Pan Africa Christian University (PAC University), pursuing the degree of Master of Arts in Leadership.

She is at the final stage of the programme and is preparing to collect data to enable her finalise on the Thesis. The Thesis title is ***"The Mediating Role of Succession Planning on the Relationship between Strategic Leadership and Organisational Performance of Kenya Airways".***

We kindly request that you allow her obtain a research permit so as to proceed and conduct research at Kenya Airways.

Warm Regards,

PAN AFRICA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
REGISTRAR
P O Box 56875 - 00200
TEL 0721 932050 0734 400694
NAIROBI KENYA

Dr. Lilian Vikiru
Registrar Academic Affairs
Pan Africa Christian University
Lumumba Drive, Roysambu, off Kamiti Rd, off Thika Rd
Tel: +254 730-955306/+254734400694
Email: registrar.aa@pacuniversity.ac.ke
Web: www.pacuniversity.ac.ke

Appendix VI: Certificate of Ethical Clearance

Certificate of Ethical Clearance

Pan Africa Christian University

Thika Road Campus | Valley Road Campus
P.O. Box 56875-00200 | +254 730955000 | +254 730955501/2
enquiries@pacuniversity.ac.ke | www.pacuniversity.ac.ke

INSTITUTIONAL SCIENTIFIC ETHICSREVIEW COMMITTEE (IS E R C)

This Certificate is awarded to

Victoria Mutungi

For the research titled

THE MEDIATING ROLE OF SUCCESSION PLANNING ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AND ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF KENYA AIRWAYS

Ref/PAC/ISERC/017/4/23

having complied with PAC University Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee's guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures for ethical clearance.

This Certificate is issued subject to compliance with the following requirements:

i. Before commencing the study, you are required to obtain a Research License from the NationalCommission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) as well as other institutional clearances as and where needed.
ii. Only approved documents including research instruments and informed consent forms will beused.
iii. All changes including amendments and/or deviations are to be submitted for review andclearance by PAC University Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee before use.
iv. Any expected or unexpected changes that may increase the risks to study participants or affectthe integrity of the study must be reported in writing to PAC University Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee within two days.
v. Any request for renewal or approval must be submitted to PAC University Institutional ScientificEthics Review Committee at least four weeks prior to the expiry of this Certificate and must be accompanied by a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.

Date of issue	28/4/2023	Expiry date	28/4/2024

DR.JANE KINUTHIA

Secretary PAC_ISERC

Appendix VII: NACOSTI Research License

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: **832930**

Date of Issue: **19/May/2023**

RESEARCH LICENSE

This is to Certify that Ms.. Victoria Ndulu Mutungi of Pan Africa Christian University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Nairobi on the topic: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF SUCCESSION PLANNING ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AND ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF KENYA AIRWAYS for the period ending : 19/May/2024.

License No: **NACOSTI/P/23/25866**

832930

Applicant Identification Number

Director General
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

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See overleaf for conditions