

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

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Abstract:- In today's dynamic business landscape, the aviation sector has experienced significant transformations due to technological advancements and intensified competition. This research sought to examine the mediating role of succession planning in the relationship between strategic leadership and organizational performance in the context of Kenya Airways. Drawing on the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, Strategic Leadership theory, Upper Echelon theory, and Path-Goal Leadership theory, this study investigated the effects of strategic direction, resource utilization, organizational culture, and ethical practices on Kenya Airways' performance. Using an explanatory sequential mixed-method research design, data was collected from a sample of 88 top and middle managers within Kenya Airways. The study employed a semi-structured questionnaire, open-ended interviews, and secondary data from financial reports spanning 2013 to 2021. The findings revealed that succession planning plays a partial mediating role on the relationship between strategic leadership and organizational performance. The findings have practical implications for the aviation industry, providing insights into the importance of strategic leadership, succession planning, and related factors in enhancing organizational performance.

Keywords:- Succession planning, Strategic leadership, Organizational performance, Aviation industry, Resource-Based View (RBV), Mediation.

I. INTRODUCTION

The business arena in the 21st century has become volatile and uncertain, affecting organizations' performance. The aviation sector, in particular, has faced turbulent times in a volatile and uncertain business world such as changes in regulations, technological advancements, competition from low-cost airlines, high jet fuel costs, and the recent COVID-19 pandemic. These challenges have negatively impacted on the sector's performance, leading to negative margins and a decline in cargo and passenger flights. However, the importance of this sector in promoting economic growth necessitates its sustainability.

In various regions, such as the Middle East, the aviation sector experienced a negative operating margin and a drop in cargo volume due to trade tensions between the USA and China. Similarly, airlines in the Asia-Pacific region witnessed a decline in cargo volume. These challenges have not only affected passenger flights but also cargo flights, resulting in negative margins (IATA, 2020). In Indonesia, the aviation sector's performance declined between 2014 and 2018 due to factors such as a weakening national currency and high navigation costs. Garuda Indonesia, the country's flag carrier, recorded a significant decrease in return on equity (ROE), indicating the impact of high operating costs on overall profitability (Prissia & Daryanto, 2019). African airlines have also faced challenges in achieving dominance in the global market and have experienced leadership failures. For instance, South Africa Airways accumulated increasing losses and had to undergo a business rescue initiative sponsored by the government. Additionally, partnerships between airlines, such as Air Tanzania Limited and South African Airways, collapsed due to accumulated losses and other operational issues (Busungu, 2020; Nyatumba & David, 2021). Kenya Airways, the largest airline in Kenya, has also faced poor performance and financial losses. The airline has recorded a downward trend in its performance since 2014, with net losses increasing over the years. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated the airline's financial challenges, leading to a record-high net loss in 2020. As a result, the airline has relied on government support (Mungai & Bula, 2018; Nyatumba & Poe, 2022).

These challenges in the aviation sector highlight the importance of effective leadership to navigate through turbulent times and ensure organizational sustainability. Strategic leadership, as the independent variable in this study, refers to top leaders who develop and implement long-term plans for organizational enhancement. Strategic leadership, characterized by developing and implementing well-thought-out plans for long-term enhancement, plays a crucial role in organizational sustainability. Strategic leaders are responsible for making strategic decisions that impact organizational performance (Kim, 2020; Munawaroh et al., 2021; Ojogiwa, 2021).

However, there comes a time when strategic leaders have to leave their positions, creating a potential gap that can impact performance. To ensure continuity and success, succession planning becomes crucial. Succession planning is a deliberate process that identifies potential leaders within an organization, mentors them, and transfers knowledge to ensure organizational continuity and talent retention (Saporito & Winum, 2012; Galbraith et al., 2012).

Research has shown that succession planning directly affects employee performance and contributes to an organization's competitive advantage and overall performance (Amirkhani et al., 2016; Conțu, 2020). However, many organizations, including those in the United Nations system, manufacturing companies, and NGOs, have given little attention to succession planning, resulting in a lack of formal plans and discrepancies in implementation (Sukayri, 2016; Ballaro & Polk, 2017; Onyango et al., 2014).

The mediating effect of succession planning on the relationship between strategic leadership and organizational performance is a key focus of this study. By examining talent retention, knowledge transfer, leadership development, and leadership tenure as elements of succession planning, the study aims to understand how succession planning influences the performance of Kenya Airways.

➤ *Statement of the Problem*

The aviation sector, particularly in regions such as Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East, has faced significant challenges in achieving sustainable organizational performance, characterized by net losses, high fuel costs, currency fluctuations, and inadequate state funding. Kenya Airways, one of the prominent airlines in Africa, has experienced a consistent decline in performance, recording net losses since 2013, accompanied by a notable turnover of CEOs. This trend raises concerns about the impact of leadership transitions and the effectiveness of strategic leadership in contributing to the airline's poor performance. Moreover, the existing literature on strategic leadership and organizational performance in the aviation sector, particularly within the Kenyan context, is limited. Additionally, methodological gaps exist in previous studies, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between succession planning and organizational performance. Therefore, this study aimed at investigating the mediating effect of succession planning on the relationship between strategic leadership and organizational performance in the context of Kenya Airways.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Theoretical Review*

This study was anchored in the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory as the main theory, supported by the Strategic Leadership theory, Upper Echelons theory, and Path-Goal Leadership theory to establish the relationship between strategic leadership, succession planning, and organizational performance.

➤ *Resource-Based View Theory*

The Resource-Based View theory emphasizes that organizational development is shaped by deliberate attempts to effectively utilize resources (Penrose, 1959; Wernerfelt, 1984). Resources can be tangible or intangible, such as physical, organizational, and human resources. The RBV theory suggests that resources that are valuable, rare, difficult to imitate, and enable competitive advantage contribute to organizational performance (Barney, 2001). Human capital is considered a key resource, with a focus on succession management (Waruiru & Kagiri, 2015). The RBV theory supports the dependent variable of organizational performance and the independent variables of strategic leadership in this study.

➤ *Strategic Leadership Theory*

Strategic Leadership theory focuses on the role of top leadership in creating an organization's mission, vision, and providing strategic direction to achieve organizational goals. It highlights the capacity for change, learning, and talent management (Boal & Hooijberg, 2000). Strategic leadership is characterized by intentional leadership that looks beyond functional boundaries to understand the bigger picture of the business (Patterson, 2014). Leaders' cognitive ability, values, knowledge, experience, and preferences influence their strategic choices and the organization's performance (Phipps & Burbach, 2010). The strategic leadership theory supports the independent variable of strategic leadership in this study.

➤ *Upper Echelons Theory*

The Upper Echelons theory posits that the values, personalities, and experiences of top leadership influence an organization's strategic choices and performance (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). It suggests that understanding an organization's outcome requires considering the experiences and biases of the entire top leadership (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1990). The theory also incorporates the moderating effects of managerial discretion and top leadership job demands on strategic choices (Hambrick, 2007). The Upper Echelons theory complements the role of strategic leadership as an independent variable and organizational performance as the dependent variable in this study.

➤ *Path-Goal Leadership Theory*

The Path-Goal Leadership theory asserts that leaders can assist their subordinates in achieving goals by adopting behaviors that suit their needs and the situation (House, 1971; Schriesheim & Von Glinow, 1977). Effective leaders motivate followers, provide direction, control desired outcomes, and raise employee belief in their abilities (Robbins & Judge, 2017). This theory highlights the importance of the leader-subordinate relationship, assessing subordinates' skills, and recommending growth paths and promotion opportunities (McIntyre, 2019). In the context of this study, Path-Goal Leadership theory supports the mediating variable of succession planning.

By integrating these theories, this study aimed at examining the mediating effect of succession planning on the relationship between strategic leadership and organizational performance. The RBV theory provided a foundation for understanding the role of resources, including human capital, in achieving competitive advantage. Strategic Leadership theory focused on the role of top leaders in providing strategic direction, while the Upper Echelons theory considers the influence of top leadership values and experiences on strategic choices. Finally, the Path-Goal Leadership theory underscored the importance of leadership in supporting the succession planning process, which in turn influences organizational performance.

B. Conceptual and Empirical Literature Review

The literature review not only shares the outcomes of related studies but also relates the study to an ongoing dialogue, extending previous research and filling in gaps (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The review identified existing contextual, conceptual, and methodological gaps in the literature and gave guidelines for comparing findings with other studies.

➤ *The Mediating Role of Succession Planning*

The mediating role of succession planning has been explored in several studies. Scholars such as Saporito and Winum, (2012) and Galbraith et al., (2012) define succession planning as a deliberate plan by top leadership to identify potential leaders, mentor them, and facilitate knowledge sharing for continuity and talent retention. Succession planning strategies include talent retention, leadership development, knowledge transfer, and stable leadership tenure (Galbraith et al., 2012; Akani, 2015; Shelley, 2019). Wilson and Lohmann (2019) conducted a study on airline CEOs to investigate the criteria used in selecting CEOs by the boards of the world's largest airlines. The study revealed that 50% of the airlines preferred a finance CEO, while 24% preferred an operations CEO. Additionally, 72% of the board preferred an insider CEO. The findings suggested that internal top leadership succession planning improves long-term performance, while external direct hiring may lead to strategic changes that could result in lower performance in the long run. However, the study did not measure the performance of the airlines to establish a direct relationship between succession approach and performance. Amirkhani et al., (2016) explored the impact of succession planning on the performance of a Water and Sewage Company in Tehran. Their study found that succession planning directly influenced organizational performance through organizational commitment. This highlights the importance of organizations demonstrating commitment to supporting the succession process for better performance. Barkhuizen et al., (2014) examined employees' perceptions of how leaders in the South African aviation industry responded to talent management practices. The study revealed that leaders' commitment to talent management was low. The study emphasized the need to equip leaders with essential business acumen to prioritize succession based on talent management. Shatilwe and Amukugo (2016) investigated the issues affecting the implementation of succession planning within the Namibian

Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS). Their study identified leadership reluctance, lack of awareness, insufficient information on succession planning, and internal resistance to change as hindrances to successful implementation. The study recommended creating more awareness of succession planning and integrating it into the strategic plan and corporate culture of the ministry. Ahmed (2020) examined the effect of succession planning on the performance of Family Bank in Kenya. The study found that succession planning involved preparing the organization for leadership change, as well as retaining and rewarding high-performing employees, leading to significant performance improvement. However, the study did not incorporate annual reports in its analysis of performance.

➤ *Strategic Leadership and Organizational Performance*

Several empirical studies have explored the relationship between strategic leadership and organizational performance, highlighting the positive impact of strategic leadership on overall organizational success. Scholars such as Wart (2011), Strand (2014), Kim (2020), Munyao (2020) and Munawaroh et al., (2021) have defined strategic leadership as the aptitude to scan the organizational environment, plan deliberately, articulate vision, make decisions, and manage organizational change. They emphasize that strategic leadership plays a crucial role in driving organizational goals and ensuring long-term sustainability. Özer and Tınaztepe (2014) conducted a study on an export firm in Turkey and concluded that leaders have a significant positive impact on organizational performance. In a similar study, Khasawneh (2020) examined the role of strategic leadership in creating a competitive advantage within the tourism sector in Jordan. Although the study had a relatively small sample size, it found a positive correlation between strategic leadership and the improvement of the tourism sector's competitiveness in Jordan. Onu et al., (2018) investigated the relationship between strategic leadership and the performance of manufacturing firms in Nigeria. Their study, based on a cross-sectional survey of manufacturing firms listed on the Nigerian Stock Exchange, revealed a strong relationship between strategic leadership and organizational performance. Mukhezakule and Tefera (2019) conducted a study on domestic airlines in South Africa, using a mixed methods approach. Their findings indicated possible relationships between strategic leadership, corporate strategy, and the performance of the aviation sector. Moses and Murigi (2019) focused on the influence of strategic leadership on domestic airline firms in Kenya. Their survey research design targeted the top management of domestic airline firms and revealed a positive relationship between strategic leadership and the performance of domestic airlines in Kenya. The study, in its scope, focused solely on domestic operations and did not consider the potential impact on international operations. To address this gap, the study delved into the examination of the influence of strategic leadership on the performance of Kenya Airways, an airline that operates both domestic and international flights.

C. Conceptualization and Hypothesis

Based on the literature reviewed above on strategic leadership and the mediating role of succession planning, it is evident that strategic leadership plays a crucial role in shaping organizational performance. Strategic leaders are responsible for setting the direction, vision, and goals of an organization, as well as aligning resources and guiding employees towards achieving those objectives. The effective implementation of strategic leadership has been found to positively impact organizational performance and contribute to a competitive advantage. However, the mediating role of succession planning in the relationship between strategic leadership and organizational performance remains relatively unexplored, particularly in the context of Kenya Airways. A conceptual framework is suggested to forecast the mediating influence of succession planning on the relationship between strategic leadership and Kenya Airways' organizational performance based on the thorough examination carried out in this study. The conceptual model is according to Figure 1 below.

In this study, strategic leadership was measured through variables such as strategic direction, organizational culture, ethical practices, and effective resource utilization. Succession planning was assessed through indicators like talent retention, knowledge transfer, leadership development, and leadership tenure. Finally, organizational performance was evaluated using both financial and non-financial performance measures.

The study aimed to test the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis H₁: Strategic leadership has no significant impact on the organizational performance of Kenya Airways.

Hypothesis H₂: Succession planning has no significant mediating role on the relationship between strategic leadership and organizational performance of Kenya Airways.

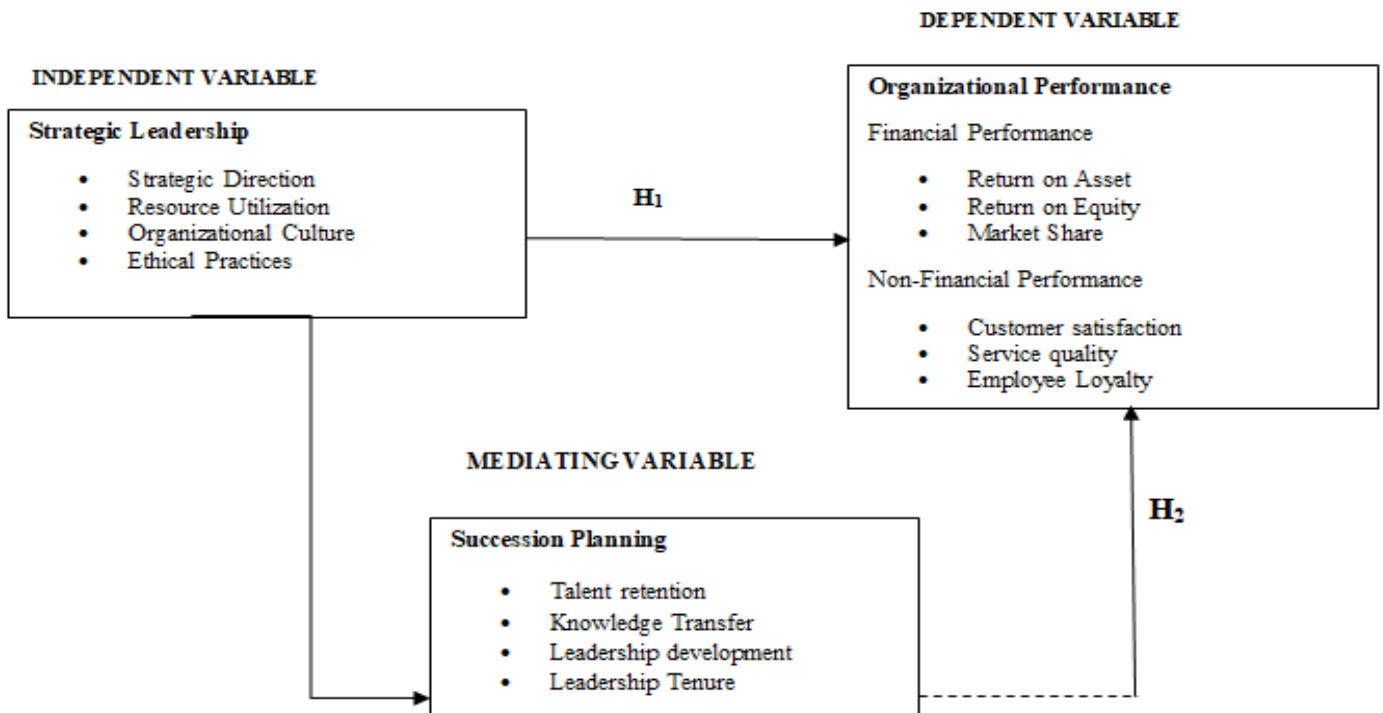


Fig 1 Conceptual Model

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

D. Research Design

The study employed an explanatory sequential mixed research design. This design involved collecting quantitative data first, followed by qualitative data in the second phase. The integration of both approaches aimed to provide a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between strategic leadership, succession planning, and organizational performance in Kenya Airways. The initial quantitative analysis provided a general understanding of Kenya Airways' performance by analyzing numerical data. Subsequently, the qualitative analysis allowed for a deeper exploration and explanation of the quantitative findings. By

incorporating participants' perspectives and insights, the qualitative data helped refine and enhance the understanding obtained from the quantitative data. This mixed research design was chosen to overcome potential limitations associated with using a single approach. By combining quantitative and qualitative data, the study aimed to obtain a more complete and enriched understanding of the research topic, thereby increasing confidence in the study's findings.

E. Target Population and Sampling Technique

The target population of this study consisted of 112 top and middle management team of Kenya Airways across 12 departments. The sample size was determined using the Yamane Statistical Formula, resulting in a sample of 88

participants. Proportional stratified sampling was employed to ensure representation from each department, while purposive sampling was used to select leaders with more than 10 years of service for the qualitative phase. These sampling methods were chosen to ensure a balanced and informed representation of the target population.

Table 1 Sample Size Distribution

Strata	Stratum Size	Sample size
Operations	18	14
Finance	16	13
Technical	14	11
Managing Director Office	11	9
Commercial	11	9
Human Resource	10	8
Sales and Marketing	10	8
Cargo	7	6
Information Technology	6	5
Corporate Communication	5	4
Legal Office	2	2
Corporate quality, safety and environment	2	2
Total	112	88

F. Research Data and Analysis

This study utilized both primary and secondary data sources. Quantitative data was collected through a structured questionnaire, while qualitative data was gathered through virtual interviews using open-ended questions. Secondary data was obtained from publicly available financial reports of Kenya Airways. The sample size for the quantitative phase consisted of 88 top and middle management members of Kenya Airways. The questionnaire was divided into seven sections, covering the variables of strategic leadership, succession planning, and organizational performance. A five-point Likert Scale was used to assess the participants' responses. The open-ended interview method was chosen to encourage detailed responses. A pre-test was conducted on a sample of 10 participants from the security department to assess questionnaire comprehension and validity. The pre-test results were not included in the final analysis. The validity of the research instrument, in this

case, the questionnaire, was established through face validity, ensuring a logical link between the questions and the study objectives. Content validity was also assessed to ensure that all relevant issues and attitudes were covered in the questionnaire. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, with a value range between 0.7 and 1.0 considered sufficient. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.893 was obtained, indicating a high level of internal consistency and reliability for the questionnaire. Data collected from the questionnaire underwent thorough editing to address inconsistencies and missing values. It was then transformed into numerical values for analysis using SPSS Version 25 software. For each study variable, descriptive statistics were calculated, including the mean, frequencies, standard deviation, and percentages. To make it easier to understand and compare the variables, the results were then presented in tables. The coefficient of determination (R²) was used to evaluate the validity of the model and assess the degree to which variations in strategic leadership account for variations in organization performance. For the purpose of evaluating the overall significance of the model, the F-statistic was calculated at a 95% confidence level. P-values were used in hypothesis testing to help decide what the null hypothesis should be. The null hypothesis is rejected if the p-value is less than 0.05, indicating a significant association between the variables. The study followed a four-step approach, as proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986), to test for mediation. Step 1 involved examining the direct relationship between strategic leadership and the performance of Kenya Airways. In Step 2, a regression analysis was performed to assess the impact of strategic leadership on succession planning. Step 3 focused on testing the effect of succession planning on organizational performance. Finally, in Step 4, a multiple regression analysis was carried out to assess whether succession planning acted as a partial or full mediator.

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. The results are presented in table 2 below.

Table 2 Diagnostic Test Results

Diagnostic Test	Test	Observation	Conclusion Based on Observation
Normality	Shapiro-Wilk Tests	P>0.05	Normally Distributed
Linearity	Pearson Correlation	P<0.05	Linearly Related
Multicollinearity	Variance Inflation factor	VIF<10	No Severe Multicollinearity

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS

A. 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 are according to table 3 below.

Table 3 Response Rate

Category	Freq	%
Response	75	85.23
Non-Response	13	14.77

B. Respondent’s Demographic Characteristics

The demographic characteristics of the study participants in Kenya Airways were analyzed to gain a better understanding of the sample composition. The findings showed a gender disparity, with males comprising 76% of the participants and females making up 24%. The study primarily focused on middle and department-level managers, representing 44% and 40% of the participants, respectively. Senior managers constituted the smallest proportion at 16%. In terms of length of employment, a significant portion of participants (60%) had worked for Kenya Airways for more than 15 years, while smaller proportions had tenures of 11-15 years (25.3%), 5-10 years

(8%), and less than 5 years (6.7%). The distribution across departments was diverse, with the Finance department having the largest representation (28%), followed by Operations (16%) and Technical (13.3%). Other departments, such as the Managing Director’s office, Human Resources, Information Technology, Cargo, Corporate Communication, Legal, and Corporate Quality, Safety, and Environment, each accounted for smaller proportions. Overall, these demographic characteristics provided valuable insights into the composition of the sample and its relevance to the research objectives. The statistics are summarized in table 4.

Table 4 Respondent’s Demographic Characteristics

Gender		
Distribution	Freq	%
Male	57	76
Female	18	24
Management Level		
Category	Freq	%
Middle	33	44
Departmental	30	40
Senior	12	16
Number of Years Worked at KQ		
N of Years	Freq	%
Above 15	45	60
11-15	19	25.3
5-10	6	8
Below 5	5	6.7
Departmental Representation		
Dept Name	Freq	%
Operations	12	16
Technical	10	13.3
Human resource	6	8
Cargo	5	6.7
Legal and Corporate	4	5.3
Finance, Commercial and Sales	21	28
Managing Director office	8	10.7
Information Technology	5	6.7
Corporate Communication	4	5.3

C. Descriptive Statistics

Table 5 Descriptive Statistics Summary

Variable	No. of Items	Reliability Statistics	Aggregate Mean	Aggregate Std. Deviation
Strategic Direction	12	0.791	3.825	0.495
Resource Utilization	10	0.981	3.706	0.514
Organization Culture	9	0.855	3.509	0.559
Ethical Practices	7	0.854	3.803	0.581
Succession Planning	6	0.747	3.702	0.613
Organizational Performance	7	0.757	3.368	0.700

The descriptive analysis provided an overview of the data set by creating summary statistics that highlighted significant patterns and trends. Measures of central tendency

and dispersion were used to provide a thorough overview of the dataset as presented in table 5.

The findings showed that all variables had high reliability statistics (>0.7), indicating good internal consistency. This suggests that the measurement items used to assess the constructs were reliable and consistent. The dimensions of strategic direction had an aggregate mean of 3.825 and a standard deviation of 0.495. This suggests that, on average, the organization had a well-defined and effectively communicated vision. The alignment between goals and measurable targets was strong, indicating a clear focus on achieving specific objectives. The presence of strategic planning within the organization was evident. Fully implementing strategic plans appeared to have room for enhancement, indicating a potential gap between the planned strategies and their actual execution. Additionally, the commitment of senior leadership to the overall welfare of the organization could be strengthened.

Kenya Airways had a moderate degree of resource utilization, as demonstrated by the results (mean =3.706 and a std. dev=0.514). The results demonstrate abilities in some areas, such as hiring professionals and investing in infrastructure. The ability of the airline's whole resource pool is positively impacted by these aspects. The entire optimization of resource usage and the reduction of waste, however, still have space for improvement.

Additionally, the results revealed that Kenya Airways exhibited a moderately positive organizational culture (mean=3.509, std. dev=0.559), with strengths in areas such as employee engagement, value implementation, and adaptability. However, there are opportunities to enhance the working environment, clarify the reward system, improve communication effectiveness, and further promote employee flexibility and adaptability.

Further, Kenya Airways was revealed to have a generally positive perception of its ethical practices with a commitment to integrity and transparency (mean =3.803, std. dev=0.581). However, there is room for improvement in fully engaging stakeholders and considering their opinions in decision-making processes.

The statistics indicated a moderate level of agreement in various dimensions of succession planning at Kenya Airways (mean=3.702, std. dev=0.613). There was generally a positive perception of 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, there was a relatively higher level of agreement regarding the encouragement of professional development in junior employees.

Finally, the results indicate that the overall organization performance, as measured by the aggregate mean, is 3.368 with a standard deviation of 0.7. This suggests a moderate level of performance across the different dimensions and indicators assessed in the study.

D. Test of Hypothesis

To investigate the effect of strategic leadership on Kenya Airways' organizational performance, a multivariate linear regression model was used. The same model was used in the study's attempt to determine whether succession planning was a significant mediating factor in the relationship between strategic leadership and organizational performance.

In the study, two hypotheses were investigated. The first hypothesis looked at how Kenya Airways' organizational performance was directly impacted by strategic leadership. The second hypothesis explored the mediating role of succession planning in the relationship between strategic leadership and organizational performance. To test the hypothesis a four-step approach, as proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986) was conducted and the results summarized in table 6 below.

Table 6 Summary of the Regression Results for Mediating Effect

Parameters	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step4	Change	Decision
R squared	0.202	0.08	0.497	0.565	0.363	Succession planning has a partial mediating effect on the relationship between strategic leadership and organizational performance
Adjusted R ²	0.191	0.068	0.490	0.553	0.362	
F-value	18.454	6.363	72.155	46.720	28.266	
β ₀ Constant	0.832	1.969	0.959	-0.308	-1.14	
Strategic leadership	0.449	0.283		0.271	-0.178	
Succession planning			0.705	0.628	-0.077	

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. A summary of the test of hypothesis is according to table 7 below.

Table 7 Summary of the Test Results for the Study Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Findings	Decision	Conclusion
Strategic leadership has no significant impact on organizational performance of Kenya Airways	$P < 0.001$	Reject H_1	Strategic leadership has a significant impact 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 H_2	Succession planning has a partial significant mediating role on the relationship between strategic leadership and organizational performance of Kenya Airways

V. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The above findings support the principles of the resource-based view (RBV) theory, which emphasizes the role of firm-specific resources and capabilities in driving sustainable competitive advantage and improving organizational performance. The positive and significant impact of strategic leadership on organizational performance aligns with the RBV perspective, as strategic leadership involves the development and deployment of strategic resources and capabilities that contribute to improved performance and competitive advantage.

The findings also align with the Upper Echelons Theory, which suggests that the characteristics and actions of top executives significantly influence organizational outcomes. Effective strategic leadership, as demonstrated in the study, indicates that the decisions and actions of top executives have a substantial impact on organizational performance.

The conclusions drawn by Onu et al. (2018) further support the findings, emphasizing the robust relationship between strategic leadership and performance. This underscores the importance of effective strategic leadership in driving the success and performance of organizations, including Kenya Airways.

The positive and highly significant impact of succession planning on organizational performance aligns with the principles of path-goal theory. Succession planning, which involves selecting and developing future leaders, plays a crucial role in path-goal theory by ensuring competent individuals are prepared to assume leadership roles and positively impact organizational performance.

VI. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER STUDIES

The study revealed a positive and statistically significant impact of strategic leadership on organizational performance ($p < 0.001$). Additionally, 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 ($p = 0.001$).

Based on the findings, the study recommends that 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.

Further research in change management and organizational resilience is recommended to explore Kenya Airways' ability to effectively manage change and adapt to external disruptions. By investigating the strategies, processes, and capabilities that contribute to the organization's resilience in the face of challenges such as industry disruptions, economic fluctuations, and global crises, valuable insights can be gained. Understanding how Kenya Airways successfully navigates change and builds resilience can provide practical recommendations and lessons for other organizations. This research can contribute to the development of best practices in change management

and organizational resilience, enabling organizations across industries to enhance their own capabilities in managing change and thriving in turbulent environments.

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