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Effects of Top Performing Employees' Unexpected Voluntary Turnover on Strategy Performance of Airline Organizations in Africa: Case of Kenya Airways

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Abstract

The rising trend of unexpected top-performing employee turnover has become an issue of concern among the Airline organizations in Africa. The aim of the research was to establish how top performers' unexpected voluntary turnover affects strategy success in African airline organizations, with a focus on Kenya Airways. The study adopted a descriptive research methodology. 294 participants were chosen using systematic sampling from 1111 KQ workers from lower, middle and top levels of management. Data collected using questionnaires was analysed using multivariate regression and Pearson correlation tests. The study revealed that the unexpected top employee voluntary turnover leads to a loss of human resources, resulting in a deficit in employee skills that are important and necessary for successful implementation of organization's strategies. The study concluded that effective organization strategy execution requires experienced personnel who are familiar with the organization's vision, strategies, and working atmosphere, as well as the expertise and experience to perform when called upon. The study recommended that Kenya Airways should commit to employee career development and pursue ways to better compensate top performers in order to prevent unexpected voluntary turnover. Further, professional advancement and proper staff compensation, according to the findings of this study, would bring about a domino influence, increasing employee work satisfaction, that will lead to better strategy performance and job performance.

Keywords: *Strategy performance, employee turnover, voluntary employee turnover, Kenya Airways.*

1.1 Introduction

Many strategic managers and companies around the world have been concerned about strategy performance (Awino, 2015). The idea of strategy has developed into an essential management aspect as the world and market environment's trends and dynamics have grown. Given the rapid change in the market environment, evaluating and conceptualizing the performance of a strategy becomes especially difficult (Richard et al, 2011). Around the globe, strategic managers and businesses have expressed concern about strategy performance (Awino, 2015). As the sophistication and trends of business atmosphere grew, the idea of strategy transformed into a crucially important management aspect. Given the ever-changing business world, conceptualizing and measuring strategy effectiveness has proven to be difficult (Richard et al, 2011). Part of the challenge stems from impediments or obstacles in strategy implementation. Political influence on national flag carriers in Africa, according to Chibamu (2017), has generally led to loss of essential resources and cost consequences which have had a significant effect on their strategic success.

The airline industry is mandated to ensure the long-term growth of East African countries (Irandu, 2010). However, it faces serious market difficulties attributed to the micro and macro environments. According to Franke and John (2011), the macro environment consists of unpredictable factors that influence decision-making and impacting performance and strategies. Flying planes profitably in Africa is more challenging than anywhere else in the globe due to high jet fuel prices, limited flying privileges and poor infrastructure. Worse is the fact that flag carriers have been subjected to political interference, with some succumbing to public-sector protectionism, corruption and cronysm. Many airlines in Africa, including Kenya Airways, South African Airways and Egypt Air, have recently suffered losses and are only able to survive on government funding rather than their financial capabilities. According to Zikalala (2016), the biggest problem facing most of the companies in this period is to retain employees. The Economist Magazine (2016), in "The Future of Employee Retention," an international business index shows that businesses do not prioritize employee retention. According to the article, companies place a higher priority on increasing profits than establishing and maintaining relationship with staff, particularly in recent years. The act of employees leaving an employer willingly due to ideas that are unrelated to the institution is referred to as voluntary employee turnover (Prasad, 2016).

In most cases, voluntary employee turnover is unexpected and it is often motivated by poor working environments, remuneration disparities, leadership challenges, and competition poaching. Heneman2and Judge2 (2009) classify voluntary2turnover into two categories: avoidable and unavoidable turnover. Avoidable turnover2is that2which can2be avoided by actions such as wage adjustment. Employee-initiated departure, which may be caused by lack of commitment on the part of management to worker's needs, is often referred to as avoidable turnover (Verdaman, 2017). Unavoidable turnover occurs due to a variety of unavoidable factors, including family relocation, employee death and others. This research did not make any distinction between the two hence; both unavoidable and avoidable employee turnover were investigated.

Despite having a highly skilled and trained workforce, Kenya Airways (KQ) still loses talent, resulting in a loss of experience and expertise. Loss of best talent means a losing high-level expertise, skills, experience, and organizational culture, which are all critical for every organization's performance and strategy execution. This may be the explanation behind the organization's poor performance in the recent years. KQ lost KES 10 billion in year 2016 after

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losing KES 26 billion in year 2015, among other problems, necessitating an emergency government loan to hold the airline intact (Kenya Airways, 2017). This indicates poor financial strategy or poor strategy execution, which results in poor performance across the board. Despite this grave issue, no research has been conducted on the relationship between top performers' unexpected voluntary turnover and strategy performance. This relationship is critical for KQ to boost its productivity and ensure its perpetual competitiveness. On that note, the aim of this research is to answer some key questions, such as how does lost human capital affect strategy efficiency. What impact do new workers have on strategy results after top performers unexpectedly leave? Do missing employee interrelationships impact strategy performance? The answers to the questions are extremely important in shaping KQ's strategic plans. As a result, the aim of this research was to add to management and strategic knowledge through examining how unexpected voluntary turnover of top performing employees affects KQ's strategy performance.

1.2 Research Objectives

i. To determine the influence of lost human capital on the strategy performance of Kenya Airways in Kenya.
ii. To establish the influence of new employees on the strategy performance of Kenya Airways in Kenya.
iii. To determine the influence of lost employee interrelationship on the strategy performance of Kenya Airways in Kenya.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Concept of Strategy Performance

The human effort to achieve desirable ends using available resources is referred to as strategy (McKeown, 2011). Hendry (2010) described strategy as future-oriented engagement plan that focuses upon competitive environment in order to achieve the organization's specific competitive objectives. This emphasized the importance of top management in developing the core organization plan, which is later passed down to the lower company's units for evaluation, implementation and monitoring. According to McKeown (2013), strategy performance encompasses all the systems of planning, implementing, and realizing the strategic orientation goals, and not just the strategy outcome. The strategy goals are in line with the performance expectations. The achievement of an organization's laid objectives within a given time frame and through tactful use of limited resources is referred to as strategy performance. According to Freedman (2015), strategy is critical in any organization because success is often reliant on limited resources, which necessitates the setting of targets, definition of concrete actions, and resource mobilization to carry out those actions, all of which determine the significant role of a strategy.

The aspects and concepts of strategy performance are defined by a number of theories and models. Michael Porter's five forces theory shows clearly how a company can leverage the benefit of favourable and current occurrences in its business setting to remain ahead in the competition by identifying its competitors' steps and creating a meaningful business strategy as a result (Oneren, 2017). The McKinsey 7s model is based on the idea that for an organisation to work properly, seven components must be adjusted and reinforced jointly. The model explains how core an organization's performance elements, such as system, style, shared values, staff, skills, structure and strategy, are interconnected and implemented to meet management's

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objectives. According to Oneren (2017), the model is basically a Value Based Management (VBM) that offers a company a framework for creating value within its entire organisation.

2.2 Concept of Voluntary Employee Turnover

Voluntary turnover can be defined as the employee's option and decision to leave an organization, whereas involuntary turnover is a form of employee departure that occurs when a company wishes to break relationship with the employee (Thomas, 2009). Employee turnover, as suggested by Hom, Lee, and Shaw (2017), is expensive beyond anyone's expectation. The true cost of substitution involves hidden costs such as lost productivity, low morale and workplace safety concerns. When another company comes 'poaching' due to excellent performance and a recommendation from an ex-employee, one employee leaving will contribute to an entire employee section leaving. The resource-based view theory emphasizes that internal resources of an organization are solely responsible for its performance. Employees are classified as internal resources of the organization. The Social Exchange Theory (SET), confirms the value of employees in organization. It asserts that reassurance actions between2an organization2and its2employees leads to organizational productivity (Aldhuwaihi, 22013). To that end, the underlying theoretical notion is that unexpected voluntary turnover has major underlying influence on company's efficiency. According to Jannifer (2013) and Carter and Zachar (2019), the cost associated with losing skilled human resources outweighs re-staffing cost. The authors claim that among the basic, non-imitable and intangible assets that a company lacks when employees unexpectedly leave is their knowledge, skills, and experience.

Unexpected voluntary turnover has major underlying influence on company's efficiency, as per Carter and Zachar (2019). According to Jannifer (2013), the cost associated with losing skilled human resources outweighs re-staffing cost. She claims that among the basic, non-imitable and intangible assets that a company lacks when employees unexpectedly leave is their knowledge, skills, and experience. Lee (2008) supports that argument by stating that working culture and interrelations, both of which are crucial for a firm's success in meeting its goals, have an effect on general performance. Once new employees arrive, Lee observes that they attempt to influence the working climate based on their past work experience in former firms, which may or may not fit into the existing firm strategy. New employees and low-staffing are two other factors that have an effect on the firm's efficiency. Low staffing can be sensitive to certain businesses and have an effect on their strategic orientation. However, for certain firms, low staffing and loss of employees can be beneficial on the short-term basis (Allen, 2008).

2.3 Empirical Literature Review

Several research studies about airline industry, especially KQ, have already been undertaken, but only few have focused on the impact of unexpected staff turnover on strategy results. Wanjiku (2014) focused on strategic challenges facing the airline industry, such as competitive pressures, protection, and costs, but never investigated whether there exists a connection between strategy performance and employee turnover. Morgan and Chimanzi's (2015) study concentrated on the micro factors that affect strategy success. According to their findings, companies that invest in employee education achieve a higher level of strategy performance. However, their research did not address how the rest of workers impact strategy success and how to involve them in for purposes of achieving the targeted strategy outcomes. Zhang (2016) investigated the factors that influence employee turnover. Staff that have a lower degree of job satisfaction and organizational

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commitment experience negative feelings, according to the study, and are linked to turnover intention. Nevertheless, the study found no connection between lost top performers' unexpected voluntary turnover and airline organizations' strategy performance.

Specifically, studies have also empirically looked into aspects of employee turnover. For instance, studies by Doe, Asamoah, and Amegbe (2014), Claydon (2017) and Kuzu and Ozilhan (2013) studied the relationship between human capital and performance. Doe et al. (2014) found that low turnover increased employee motivation, which resulted in improved results, according to the study. High levels of turnover, on the other hand, depleted the banks' expertise, experience, and knowledge, negatively impacting their results, according to their report. Kuzu and Ozilhan (2013) revealed that knowledge sharing improved organizational efficiency. Other researchers have focused on the impact of new employees on different aspects of organizational performance. Egon (2013) investigated why new employees struggled to onboard in an international panel study of around 500 senior managers. The study discovered that conflict over the current operation strategy was among the on boarding difficulties that hampered the achievement of the expected strategy results. Egon Zehnder (2016) performed a separate survey of newly recruited executives to see how much help they get from their key stakeholders. The findings indicated that they receive the least help from their colleagues and the most support by their managers and colleagues. New staff, particularly executives, were said to face tough challenges in acculturation and political relations on their own.

In addition, some scholars have focused on lost employee interrelations after employee turnover. In South Africa, Duah and Daso (2017) investigated employee inter-relationships and their effect on organizational success. The study established that employees are more loyal when the working environment offers strong inter-relationships and performs better. Subramanian (2017) looked at employee-employer relationships and their effect on organizational structure and strategy. The results suggested that employee inter-relations shape corporate strategy, and since the business setting is unstable after employee turnover, organizations are under evolutionary pressure to continually create good working culture. Nevertheless, these studies did not specifically look into how unexpected voluntary top employee turnover impact strategy performance. The studies have mostly focused on performance and employee turnover and never recognized the impact of unexpected employee turnover on strategy performance. The seemingly elusive relationship between unexpected employee voluntary turnover and strategy performance justifies the need for this research. As such, the study sought to empirically test the hypothesis that unexpected employee turnover has negative effect on strategic performance of Kenya Airways.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

The study examined three independent variables (employee interrelations, new employees, and lost human capital) to one dependent variable, strategy performance. The conceptual framework is presented in Figure 1

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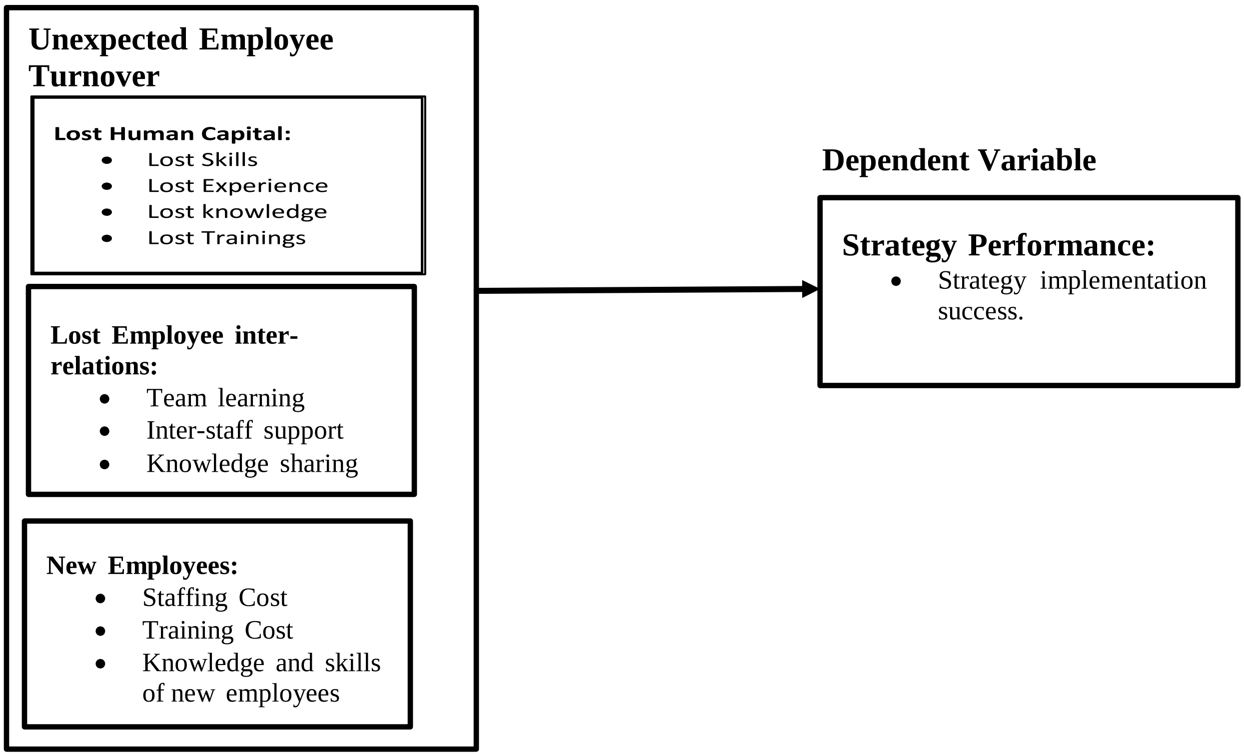

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3.1 Research Methodology

The study employed descriptive research design, which allow description of the relationship between the study variables and gives a clear overview of the variables that are important to the research hypothesis. Data was obtained from primary sources, the Kenya Airways' (KQ) management staff, who comprised 1,111 managers. 294 study respondents from top level, middle level and operational managers were sampled using Yamane (1967) formula. The sample size of each stratum, including operational managers, middle level and top-level managers, was determined using proportional stratified sampling and each respondents was selected systematically. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to gather primary data which was analysed using multivariate regression and Pearson correlation tests.

4.0 Research Findings and Discussion

The section includes a discussion of correlation analysis and regression analysis.

4.1 Correlation Analysis

The linear association between independent variables (lost employee interrelations, new employees and lost human resources) and dependent variable (strategy performance) was assessed using correlation analysis, as shown in the results presented in Table 1

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Table 1: Correlation Analysis Results

	IV	VI	VII	VIII
Strategy Performance (IV)	1.000			
Lost Human Capital (VI)	-.608**	1.000		
Lost Employee Interrelations (VII)	-.276**	.512**	1.000	
New Employees (VIII)	-.280**	.610**	.468**	1.000

Table 1 shows that the correlation coefficients of new workers, lost employee interrelations and lost human resources toward strategy results were shown to be negative, with p-values of less than 0.05. The negative correlation coefficient (-0.608) implies that lost human capital negatively correlates with strategy performance. Similarly, the negative correlation coefficient (-0.276) between lost employee interrelations negatively correlates with strategy performance and new employees (-0.28) also negative correlates with strategy performance. That is to say, when KQ loses the human capital, employee interrelations or employs new employees, those actions coincide with decline in strategy performance.

4.2 Regression Results

Regression analysis examines the relationship between variables. It is a set of statistical methods used for the estimation of relationships between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables. The sections of the regression analysis include the model fitness, analysis of variance and regression coefficients, as summarized in Table 2

Table 2: Regression Analysis Results

Model Fit	R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.658a	0.433	0.425	0.553151

ANOVA	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig.
Regression	68.815	3	22.938	57.939	.000b
Residual	90.267	228	0.396		
Total	159.08	231			

Regression Coefficients.	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig
(Constant)	7.941	0.48		16.561	0.000
Lost Human Capital	-0.78	0.131	-0.355	-5.956	0.000
Lost Employee Interrelations	-0.131	0.087	-0.092	-1.505	0.134
New Employees	-0.369	0.070	-0.337	-5.296	0.000

The results were reported at 5% significance level.
The regression model was;
$Y=7.941-0.78X_1-0.131X_2-0.369X_3$
Where Y is strategy performance, X_1 lost human capital, X_2, lost employee interrelations and X_3 is new employee

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The adjusted R-Squared value was 0.425 as shown in Table 2. This implied that independent variables accounted for 42.5% of the variations in strategy performance. The ANOVA results showed that lost human capital, lost employee interrelations and new employees are significant predictors of strategy performance. This was supported by an F statistic of 57.939 and the reported p-value of 0.000, which was less than the conventional probability significance level of 0.05. The regression coefficients presented in Table 2 reveals that lost human capital is negatively and significantly related to strategy performance (β=-0.78 p=0.000). This was supported by a calculated t-statistic of 5.956 that is larger than the critical t-statistic of 1.96. This signified a unit increase in lost human capital causes a 0.78 units decrease in strategy performance. Since the relationship is statistically significant at 5% significance level, the study rejected the null hypothesis that lost human capital has no effect on KQs' strategy performance.

The study found that lost employee interrelations is negatively and insignificantly related to strategy performance (β=-.131 p=0.134). This was supported by a calculated t-statistic of 1.505 that is smaller than the critical t-statistic of 1.96. Inter-relationships after unexpected turnover results in a 0.131 drop in strategy performance. However, at 5% significance level, the relationship is insignificant, and the study failed to reject the null hypothesis that new employees have no significant impact on KQs' strategy results. In this regard, the loss of human capital has a negative impact on KQs' strategy results. The loss of human resources has an effect on strategy performance because mentors who would have passed on experience and expertise to new employees are no longer with the organization. When top workers leave for a competitor and take their strategic expertise and strategies with them, the situation becomes even more complicated. This condition decreases the company's competitive advantage and makes the tactics appear to be ineffective.

It was also noted that new employees are negatively and significantly related to strategy performance (β=-.369p=0.000). This was supported by a calculated t-statistic of 5.296 that is larger than the critical t-statistic of 1.96. The adding of new workers to the company causes a 0.369 drop in strategy performance. Since the relationship is statistically significant at 5% significance level, the study rejects the null hypothesis that new employees have no effect on KQs' strategy performance. In this regard, new employees have a negative impact on KQs' strategy performance. This could be attributed to the fact that the amount of resources and time expended on recruiting new workers reduces the amount of resources and time available for executing KQ strategies. Furthermore, new employees need time to understand and gain expertise in the company's practices and strategies, slowing the plan execution process and creating delays in achieving strategic goals. Furthermore, new employees are usually a risk because they may not make it to complete assignments to the company's standards.

5.1 Conclusion and Recommendation

The study found that human capital is among the most important determinants of effective strategy execution. Unexpected top-performing employee voluntary turnover results in the loss of human resources, resulting in a deficiency in employee skills that are pre-requisite and relevant for better strategy execution. The study concluded that a lack of human resources would most likely result in low strategy performance in the company due to a loss of skills, knowledge, experience, expertise and strategy knowledge. In that regard, the recommendation is that businesses should retain their resourceful human capital by implementing positive human resource policies that will ensure satisfaction of key employees. Organizations should also strengthen their

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human resources by educating existing and new employees through professional training programs.

New workers were found to have a detrimental impact on strategy performance. Experienced employees who well understand the organization's vision, goals, and working environment, as well as the expertise and skills to act when needed, are required for successful strategy execution. Professional development would improve the skills of new and current workers, resulting in the effectiveness of the organization's strategy. Organizations are recommended to aim at retaining experienced workers by implementing positive human resource policies such as proper salary remuneration to increase employee work satisfaction and career development to increase employee awareness and experience. In addition, new employees must be gradually integrated into the organization's policies and culture.

The study findings and conclusion lends support to the assertion that keeping experienced and qualified employees should be among human resource practice and policies that Kenya Airways Plc should make to improve strategy performance. Kenya Airways should commit to employee career development and pursue ways to better compensate top performers in order to prevent unexpected voluntary turnover. Professional advancement and proper staff compensation, according to this report, would bring about a domino influence, increasing employee work satisfaction that will lead to better strategy performance and job performance.

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