Understanding Strategic Management Practices as a construct that enhances Performance of Selected Coffee Cooperatives in Kenya

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ABSTRACT
Coffee remains to be among the major agricultural commodities in the world that has led to employment, trade, rural development, and foreign earnings. Coffee cooperative unions in Kenya play a fundamental role in ensuring social cohesion and making the sector competitive. Nonetheless, issues like inefficiencies in production, low value addition, poor governance and imbalances in the world market still restrict their performance. This paper has analyzed how the stakeholder engagement, strategic leadership and strategic planning influence the organizational performance of coffee cooperative unions in Kenya. The study was based on the theories of Balanced Scorecard, Stakeholder, Competitive Advantage, and Resource-Based View, and it took a descriptive design and a stratified sample of 138 board and senior management of 13 cooperatives. The structured questionnaires were used to collect data that were analyzed using quantitative and qualitative analysis, including regression analysis. The results indicated that stakeholder engagement (0.312, $p < 0.01$), strategic leadership (0.284, $p < 0.05$), and strategic planning (0.341, $p < 0.01$) were positively and significantly associated with organizational performance and explained 62.7 per cent of the difference (R 2 = 0.627). Strategic planning was the most influential element, and this supports the fact that it helps in matching objectives, maximizing resources and improving efficiency in decision making. The study suggests that participatory planning systems should be institutionalized, inclusive governance, capacity building of leadership, and supportive policies must be developed in order to develop competence of management and responsiveness to change. Such strategies can help increase the sustainability, competitiveness and socio-economic level of coffee cooperative unions in Kenya.
Keywords: *Strategic Management, Strategic Planning, Stakeholder Engagement, Strategic Leadership, Coffee Cooperative Unions, Organizational Performance*

1.0 Introduction

The cooperative unions have become a significant player in socio-economic development across the world as more than three million cooperatives with close to one billion members are spread across the world (International Cooperative Alliance, 2024). Such organizations have contributed a lot to different sectors because of improving coordination, market accessibility, and rural development (Webb *et al*., 2014). Specifically, coffee cooperatives are a core component of the livelihood of smallholder farmers, who grow over 80 percent of the global coffee and, in most cases, are a part of cooperative arrangements (Fairtrade International, 2024). The cooperatives connect producers to the global market, mostly Brazil, Colombia, Ethiopia and Vietnam, hence boosting efficiency in production, trading and also socio-economic development in rural areas (Schwettmann, 2019).

Smallholder farmers play a vital role in coffee production in Africa, however, in comparing to cooperatives, there are a lot of challenges such as market volatility, climate risk, lack of access to finance, and governance challenges (Kodama, 2007; Wanyama, 2009). Structured planning, stakeholder engagement, and effective leadership have been outlined as some of the strategic management practices that can be used to respond to such challenges and improve organizational sustainability and performance (Sambuo *et a*l., 2017). Coffee is a crucial cash crop in Kenya, and more than 600,000 smallholder farmers are organized in 550 active cooperatives which play a crucial role in coffee processing, marketing, and income generation, and encourage environmental sustainability (Mugo *et al*., 2019; Food Business Africa, 2024).

Although they are significant, there are few empirical research that investigate the implications of strategic management practices on coffee cooperatives in Kenya (Mainya, 2021; Leonard et al., 2025). Most cooperatives do not have proactive planning, good leadership and meaningful stakeholder interactions, which restrict their competitiveness and efficiency in the operation (Agriculture & Food Authority, 2024). The concept of organization performance as a multidimensional construct that implies the effectiveness of organizations in their goal attainment with the resources available has gained relevance in explaining these dynamics (Elena *et al*., 2016; Chourasia and Bahuguna, 2024).

This research, thus, determines how strategic planning, strategic leadership, and stakeholder engagement affect the performance of Kenyan coffee cooperatives. Strategic planning aids in goal alignment, resource optimization, and flexibility (Monye *et al*., 2018; George *et al.*, 2019), whereas participatory management promotes the commitment of stakeholders and goal congruence (Fanasch *et al.*, 2018). Competitiveness and resilience to organizational changes are promoted by strategic leadership that is defined by the capacity to predict change, handle complexity, and empower others (Jaleha *et al*., 2018; Dahri *et al*., 2019). Through the analysis of these, the study will give evidence-based recommendations to enhance organizational efficiency, competitiveness, and sustainability in the Kenyan coffee cooperative industry.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Despite the many research studies on the topic of strategic planning, strategic leadership and stakeholder engagement, conceptual and empirical gaps remain that hinder the practical use of the two concepts in the organizational context. It is also unclear how the empirical evidence of strategic planning can be systematically applied to the human resource management in the context of different organizations, especially cooperatives (Baniya *et al.*, 2023). Although the relationship between cooperative performance and human resource practices have been realized, few studies have been conducted to understand the processes behind this relationship.

Moreover, the linkage between resource allocation decisions and financial decisions as well as strategic planning has not been thoroughly studied. Although the importance of financial governance in the organizational research becomes more and more important, little empirical research offers the validation of the ways strategic planning processes can contribute to the financial performance and sustainability (Otto, 2024). On the same note, despite the accepted importance of stakeholder engagement in the success of any organization, there is still a paucity of research examining the sustained impact of various stakeholder approaches (Reed *et al*., 2024). A large portion of the available literature is based on one-sector or case-specific research, which limits the generalizability of results and cross-sector knowledge (Vandersmissen *et al*., 2024).

Further, not many studies have been able to concurrently consider the overall effects of regulatory, cultural, and institutional environment on organizational performance. The majority of the extant models fail to consider the dynamics between the various stakeholder groups and technological environments in order to influence organizational outcomes (Zuro, 2024). These research gaps are more intense in the Kenyan coffee cooperative industry. Very little has been said on how strategic planning, leadership and stakeholder engagement are combining in bringing about performance indicators including customer loyalty, product consistency, and competitiveness in the market.

This gap highlights the necessity of an empirical study that would combine strategic management practices and situational context of cooperative systems. By closing these gaps, evidence-based recommendations will be offered to improve decision-making, collaboration among stakeholders, and sustainable competitiveness among coffee cooperative unions in Kenya.

1.2 Research Objectives

This study aims to investigate how strategic management practices contribute to the organizational performance of coffee cooperative unions in Kenya

1.2.1 General objective

The general objective of the study was to assess the influence of strategic management practices on the organizational performance of selected coffee cooperative unions in Kenya. phrase general objectives for publication

1.2.2 Specific objectives

There were the following specific objectives of the study:

i. To determine the correlation between organizational performance and strategic planning of a chosen coffee cooperative union in Kenya.
ii. To find the influence of stakeholder involvement on organizational performance of sampled coffee cooperative unions in Kenya.
iii. To determine the impact of the strategic leadership on the organizational performance of the sampled coffee cooperative unions in Kenya.

2.0 Literature Review

Management research has now shifted its focus to organizational performance because it is an indicator of how well organizations are meeting their goals, using resources, and any responsiveness to the changing environmental conditions (Elena *et al.*, 2016; Kanter *et al.*, 1981). In the cooperative organizations, including coffee cooperative unions, internal processes are not the sole determinant of performance, but are complemented by strategic management practices that inform decision-making, aligning goals, and engaging in stakeholder involvement (Dent et al., 2014; Chaves and Dutra, 2024).

This literature review focuses on 3 strategic management practices namely strategic planning, strategic leadership and stakeholder engagement and their association with organizational performance. Strategic planning implies the ability to establish clear goals and allocate resources effectively and achieve organizational flexibility (Monye *et al.*, 2018; George *et al.*, 2019). The strategic leadership is concerned with leading organizations towards change, complexity management, and empowering the members to reach the collective objectives (Jaleha et al., 2018; Dahri *et al.*, 2019). Stakeholder engagement also focuses on the active role of members, customers, and other major players in the decision-making process, which fosters trust and accountability and sustainability of organizations in the long run (Reed *et al.*, 2024; Maigwi *et al.*, 2014).

This study, by examining the current studies on the practices, determines how strategic management can impact the performance of coffee cooperative unions and indicates the major gaps in the literature, especially in the Kenyan context. It is based on this that it is possible to understand how planning, engagement with the stakeholders, and leadership can be integrated to promote operational efficiency, competitiveness and sustainable growth.

2.1 Theoretical Literature Review

The strategic management practices can be studied in the light of a number of theoretical perspectives that offer a framework of evaluating how cooperative unions can improve their performance. These theories provide information on how organizations have attained competitive advantage, resource optimization and proper stakeholder engagement. Four theories, including the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, Stakeholder theory, Competitive Advantage theory, and Balanced Scorecard framework, are used as the basis of this study. All these theories offer a unique approach to the relationship of strategic management practices i.e. strategic planning, strategic leadership, and stakeholder engagement and organizational performance as perceived in the case of coffee cooperative unions.

2.1.1 Resource-Based View Theory

Resource-Based View (RBV) is a conceptual framework of strategic management which focuses on the internal resources and the capabilities of an organization as the main sources of competitive advantage and high performance. Somewhat first suggested by Penrose (1959) and then formalized by Wernerfelt (1984), RBV transformed the strategic emphasis of firms in the external markets to firm-specific resources. Barney (1991) also established the features that render resources valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable that are critical in maintaining competitive advantage. The ability to leverage distinctive resources helps companies to differentiate, achieve greater efficiency, and attain success in long-termterm organizational success (Grant, 2019; Rumelt, 1991).

Although RBV provides a powerful concept to understand the role of internal strengths in driving performance, it has been criticized to be overly inward driven, as it does not always consider market forces and dynamic capabilities that organizations need to respond to changes in the market (Teece, 2014; Priem *et al.*, 2001). Also, the unstable definitions of the term resources and capabilities have minimized empirical testing and practical use (Foss, 1996; Sirmon *et al*., 2011). Critics also state that resource fixity might no longer apply to the modern rapidly shifting and interconnected global economy and that more complementary models describing the dynamic organizational capabilities are needed (Gibson *et al*., 2021; Teece et al., 1997).

Within the framework of coffee cooperative unions, RBV can also help understand how particular organizational resources, including strategic planning, community-focus, and market development initiatives, can be used to boost performance and the quality of the services (Amit and Schoemaker, 1993; Barney, 1991; Davis *et al.*, 2021; Otter *et al.*, 2023; Teece, 2007). Through their unique competencies, cooperatives are able to attain sustainable competitive advantage, enhance stakeholder relationship and respond efficiently to the market dynamics. RBV can therefore be a viable model to use in informing the strategic use of resources and enhancing performances in an organization.

2.1.2 Stakeholder Theory

Freeman (1984) suggested the stakeholder theory that advocates that the need of all parties who are impacted by the activities of the organization must be taken into consideration by the management of the organization, as opposed to just making profits to the investors. This expanded perspective of responsibility involves shareholders, employees, consumers, and the entire community (Corazza *et al.*, 2024; Greenwood *et al.*, 2017). It is especially applicable to cooperatives, in which member ownership and participative management places a requirement on balancing various stakeholder interests (Haack *et al.*, 2024). The identification of the legitimacy and views of the stakeholders improves the governance and strategic decision making which yields better the performance of the organization.

Opponents of the traditional stakeholder model believe that the environment consideration is not always taken into account, which can jeopardize the long-term sustainability (Zuro, 2024). The new school of thought suggests the reorganization of the theory in such a way that would incorporate ecological concerns along with economic aims and would make corporate decisions socially and ecologically viable (Corazza *et al.*, 2024). The stakeholder salience frameworks, which are applicable in international football governance, can enable organizations to evaluate authority, legitimacy, and urgency among stakeholders to influence the process of making an inclusive and effective decision (Freeman, 1984).

The stakeholder engagement in Kenyan coffee cooperative unions favors inclusive planning, whereby the interests of farmers, the management, consumers, and partners are balanced (Harrison et al., 2015; Mainya, 2015). Engagement creates the sense of trust, communication, job satisfaction, and enables cooperatives to foresee risks as it retaliates to the environmental and market pressures (Agle *et al.*, 2008; Salman *et al.*, 2024). The inclusion of social and environmental concerns into strategic plans enhances the level of ethical business, enhances market reputation, and ensures sustainable business practices (Zuro, 2024; Parrish, 2023). Finally, the stakeholder theory is a workable tool that can be utilized to ensure long-term viability, efficiency, and peaceful coexistence of the cooperatives.

2.1.3 Competitive Advantage Theory

The Competitive Advantage theory advanced by Porter (1985) stresses that the most effective strategy that could help organizations to attain high performance is a cost leadership strategy, a differentiation strategy, or a focus strategy. Firms can outclass the rivals by cutting the expenses, selling distinctive products, or serving particular customer groups. Porter also emphasizes that these strategies may help to enter the market and reinforce brand positioning in the global markets saying that the environment of a country determines organizational competitiveness in the global markets (Smit, 2010).

The theory has however been criticized. Grant (1991) notes that certain concepts are vague, the relationship between theories is not specified properly and empirical evidence is subjectively construed. According to Frasineanu (2008), the competitive advantage theory has not sufficiently considered the international influences like technological innovation and multinational corporations which greatly influence the competitive positioning of a country.

In the case of the coffee cooperative unions, the competitive advantage strategies can provide valuable advice on how the unions can position themselves using fair trade, organic, and environmental responsible practices. The dominance in quality coffee products, amelioration of

branding, and the value addition process, such as roasting, can contribute to the competitiveness and can serve the community-oriented objectives (Peretz *et al.,* 2024; Ndei *et al*., 2024). Strategic planning also helps cooperatives to predict market trends, maximize resources, and respond to new challenges and thereby maintain long-term benefit (Rachman, 2025; Ghaisani *et al.,* 2024; Boldueva *et al.,* 2024; Zohaib, 2024).
The operationalization of competitive advantage can be based on six dimensions, namely internal factors, external forces, horizontal relationships, upward relationships, rivalry, and collaboration (Andri *et al.,* 2024). Coffee cooperative unions can improve their market presence, guarantee the sustainability of the industry, and fulfil economic and social goals by addressing the issues of governance, resource management, stakeholder relations, and strategic partnerships.

2.1.4 Balanced Scorecard (BSC) Model

The importance of performance management has become a necessity of both private and public organizations, and this necessitates the use of reliable, relevant, and accurate information to inform the decision made by the manager (Isoraite, 2008; Johnsen, 2008). Balanced Scorecard (BSC) is the concept offered by Kaplan and Norton (1992) and elaborated by Kaplan (2009) to transform organizational strategy into quantifiable goals, measures, targets and initiatives. It is a combination of both financial and non-financial, through which the organizations are able to manage intangible assets (Nolan and Norton, 1991; Hoque *et al.,* 2000).
The BSC assessment is based on four perspectives that include financial performance, customer satisfaction, internal process as well as learning and growth. When it comes to day-to-day operations, organizations tend to focus on priorities and control their progress, which helps them to ensure that strategic goals will be attained (Karisa *et al.,* 2020). The old-fashioned performance measurement mainly cantered on financial measures, which were not enough, and more holistic approaches, such as the BSC, were adopted as a result of which many dimensions of performance are taken into account (Malgwi *et al*., 2014).

Studies also suggest that the Balanced Scorecard has a positive, significant impact on the performance of the organization, but the financial stability is also a major success factor in the adoption process (Oyewo *et al*., 2022). The method improves clarity levels, coordination, and communication so that the employees can comprehend how their contributions contribute to the larger organizational goals (Zairbani *et al*., 2025). It also promotes innovation, constant self-growth, and learning because it oversees internal processes and organizational capabilities (Kath *et al*., 2025). All in all, Balanced Scorecard aids in the efficient decision-making, accountability, competitiveness, and overall performance, which is why this tool becomes an essential part of strategic performance management in modern organizations.

2.2 Empirical Literature Review

Empirical research has continually emphasized the importance of strategic planning, leadership and stakeholder involvement in improving organizational performance. In a qualitative descriptive study, Paroli (2024) examined strategic planning in cooperative union human resource management and discovered that strategic planning helps organizations to accomplish their mission set to performances measurement. Strategic planning was revealed to boost the morale, engagement, and resource use of the staff, and sustain organizational flexibility by pursuing performance review systems continuously. Nevertheless, other studies in the past tended to ignore the issue of the integration of different elements of strategic planning with human resource management. In order to

fill this gap, the present study will focus on the influence of organizational trust on strategic planning performance in the case of Kenyan coffee cooperatives.
Vandersmissen *et al.* (2024) were also keen to note the increasing use of strategic planning in governmental agencies, and they also provided a middle-range construct that explains its versatility, as well as its situational competence. Traxler (2025) has pointed out the strategic resource allocation whereby, to align financial decision making with operational decision making in organization, planned systems must be in place which incorporate cross-functional teams. Alwakeel (2025) described that strategic planning promotes financial governance and sustainability because it examines the internal and external conditions of the organization, but the area of applicability in various public organizations has not been explored.
Strategic leadership is also influential in the performance of the organization. Jaleha *et al.* (2018) discovered that organization adaptability and success in dynamic environments depend on leadership directly. Ahsan (2025) revealed that executive leaders that promote a culture of lifelong learning inspire change in employees, improve their creativity, and contribute to their competitive advantage. Nasir *et al.* (2022) have shown that transformational leadership within the manufacturing industry promotes the ability to innovate and remain resilient to organizational change, especially by adopting new technologies. Bornay et al. (2025) experimentally connected leadership styles to learning within an organization, and they found that leadership mediates the learning processes to develop dynamic capabilities. Together, these papers highlight the importance of leadership as a key phenomenon in the innovation, learning, and long-term organizational performance.
The interaction of stakeholders is also important. Wanzallah *et al.* (2024) revealed that the active stakeholder involvement enhances sustainability outcomes (communication, staff capacity, and managerial control). Alshukri et al. (2024) found out that the combined use of stakeholder theory, corporate social responsibility, and dynamic capabilities contributes to organizational learning, innovation, and value creation. Nuwagaba *et al.* (2024) discovered that planning, evaluation, employee engagement, and customer satisfaction are enhanced by the involvement of stakeholders highly, and that it has a positive effect on performance. Ripoll *et al.* (2025) also emphasized the importance of stakeholder engagement as it promotes Brand Citizenship Behaviour through increasing the level of perceived brand value as well as organizational identity. The above studies all indicate that good stakeholder engagement leads to teamwork, trust and success of the organization.

All in all, empirical evidence supports the fact that strategic planning, leadership, and stakeholder engagement are interdependent organizations drivers. Although much has been done, there are still gaps that are left in the interaction of these mechanisms in terms of industry and context. Further studies need to investigate these interactions so as to come up with more profound understandings of how they combine together to influence the organizational performance and sustainability.

2.3 Conceptual Framework
Figure 1 shows the study's conceptual framework which shows the interrelation between the independent variable and the dependent variable.

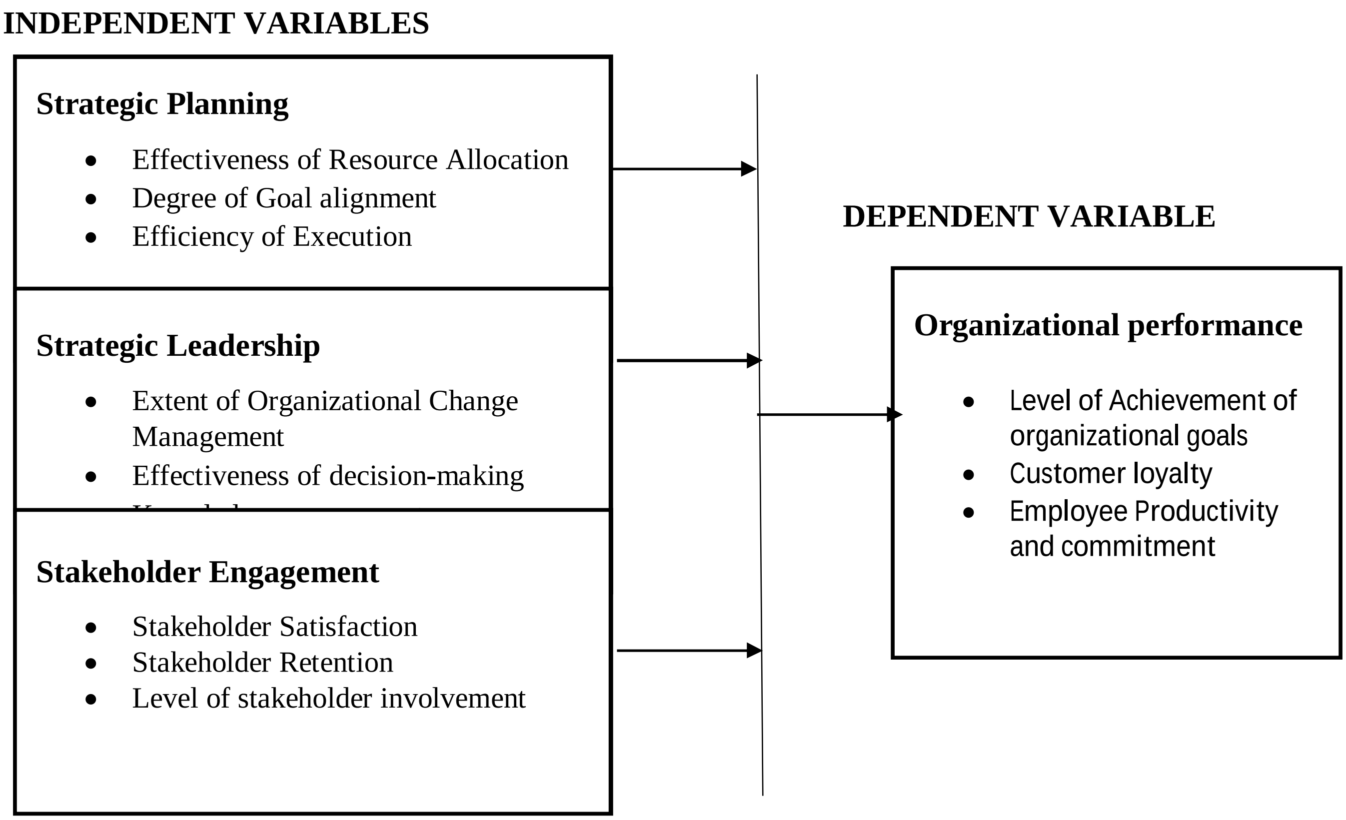

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3.0 Research Methodology

The research design utilized in the study was a descriptive research design that combined both the qualitative and quantitative research approaches, thus offering an overall insight into the implementation of strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, and strategic leadership in the context of cooperatives (Kosie *et al.,* 2024). The design was suitable because it enabled observation and description of real phenomena in the organization without manipulating the variables, which would give a precise depiction of the behaviours, trends, and operating nature.

All coffee cooperatives that were members of the National Coffee Cooperative Union (NACCU) were the target population. At the regional level, experience in strategic management, and at least 100 memberships were used as selection criteria (Giordano *et al.*, 2024). NACCU has been selected because it covers a large part of the country and plays a vital role in helping smallholder farmers of coffee and enhancing cooperative governance in Kenya (NACCU Kenya, 2024). To compare cooperative profiles, stratified sampling method was adopted to capture the differences in terms of size, location, and experience of operation (Yang *et al.*, 2024).

Managers who engage in the day-to-day processes and board members, including chairman, secretary, treasurer, and so on, who are involved in governance and strategic decision-making were also included in the list of respondents (Vitale *et al.*, 2024). To gather quantitative and qualitative data about strategic management practices, the structured questionnaires and interviews were utilized to gather data. Quantitative data were evaluated with the help of descriptive and inferential statistics to determine the patterns and relationship, whereas qualitative data were coded by means of a thematic analysis, which gives better insights into the organizational process and issues.

On the whole, the methodology offered an organized and stringent framework of studying the impact of strategic management practices on the performance of Kenyan coffee cooperatives. The sound methodology included representative sample, the combination of various sources of data, and high quality of analytical methods used by the study to guarantee validity, reliability, and applicability of the results to the whole cooperative sector led to the evidence-based conclusions and recommendations to be made in the field of practice.

4.0 Results and Discussion

Descriptive and inferential statistical tests were used to have a complete picture of the data. The data were summarized using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations to bring out trends. The application of inferential analysis or the regression analysis was to investigate the relationship between the strategic management practices and the performance of the organizations.

In order to make it clearer and more understandable, the results are organized in tables and visual summaries. By doing this, the patterns, relationship and deviations in the data are easily noticeable. The discussion incorporates the findings with the existing literature, which gives context and insight into how the variables of strategic planning, stakeholder involvement, strategic leadership, and other independent variables used in the study affects the organizational performance. All in all, the chapter is quite rigorous and structured in its analysis of the empirical data, which forms the basis to make conclusions and suggestions in the following chapters.

4.1 Descriptive statistics

The descriptive explanation of the research shows that the strategic management practices including strategic planning, stakeholder engagement and strategic leadership have been established and have a positive impact on organization performance in Kenyan coffee cooperative unions.

4.1.1 Descriptive Analysis for Strategic Planning

The descriptive analysis of the coffee cooperative unions' strategic planning is presented in this section. The analysis concentrated on aspects of strategic planning, including decision-making, operational effectiveness, employee awareness, leadership involvement, resource allocation, readiness for change, and the integration of strategy into day-to-day operations. Strategic planning practices are well-developed and institutionalized throughout the unions, according to respondents' perceptions, indicating systematic and ongoing planning processes that direct strategic direction and operational decisions. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Descriptive Analysis of Strategic Planning

Question Statement	N	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)
Our organization effectively allocates resources to achieve strategic goals.	200	4.01	0.76
Our organization regularly reviews and adjusts strategies to adapt to changing market conditions.	200	4.04	0.75
The leadership ensures that resources are optimally utilized for maximum impact.	200	3.98	0.79
Employees are well informed about the organization's strategic plans and objectives.	200	3.97	0.80
Our organization effectively responds to external economic and industry changes.	200	4.02	0.74
Strategic planning in our organization improves operational efficiency.	200	4.03	0.73
Resource allocation in our organization aligns with strategic priorities.	200	4.14	0.71
The organization has a structured process for assessing and improving its strategic planning.	200	4.00	0.77
Our strategic planning process enhances decision-making at all levels.	200	4.05	0.74
Strategic planning contributes to the organization's long-term sustainability.	200	4.06	0.72
Our organization successfully implements planned strategies.	200	4.03	0.75
12. The strategic planning process is well-integrated with day-to-day operations.	200	4.02	0.76
Aggregate Scores	**200**	**4.04**	**0.75**

These results are in line with Paroli's (2024) demonstration that good strategic planning increases employee engagement and converts organizational objectives into quantifiable results. They also concur with Vandersmissen et al. (2024), who highlighted that an organization's capacity to manage complexity and customize strategies to particular contexts is enhanced by structured and adaptive strategic planning. Traxler's (2025) claim that coordinating resource allocation and strategic intent greatly enhances operational success is supported by the low degree of response variability, which indicates a common understanding among members regarding the consistency and significance of strategic planning. This further supports Alwakeel's (2025) claim that long-term financial governance and sustainability are improved by strategic planning, as evidenced by the unions' strategic coherence, coordinated resource management, and flexible planning frameworks.

4.1.2 Descriptive Analysis for Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder satisfaction, retention, and involvement were among the metrics used to evaluate stakeholder engagement. Table 2 shows the results of the study.

Table 2 Descriptive Analysis for Stakeholder Engagement

Question Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Our organization values and prioritizes stakeholder satisfaction.	200	4.0	0.9
There is effective communication between the organization and its stakeholders.	200	4.1	0.8
The organization regularly seeks stakeholder feedback to improve services.	200	4.0	0.9
Our stakeholder engagement strategies lead to high stakeholder retention.	200	4.2	0.8
The organization provides stakeholders with opportunities to participate in decision-making.	200	4.3	0.7
The organization’s activities have a positive impact on the community.	200	4.2	0.8
Our organization actively engages with local communities to address social concerns.	200	4.1	0.9
Stakeholder engagement efforts have improved organizational performance.	200	4.3	0.7
The organization maintains long-term relationships with key stakeholders.	200	4.2	0.8
Our organization ensures transparency in stakeholder interactions.	200	4.1	0.8
Our organization tailors its stakeholder engagement strategies to different groups' needs.	200	4.0	0.9
Stakeholder engagement efforts align with the organization’s mission and vision.	200	4.3	0.7
Aggregate Mean	200	**4.2**	**0.8**

According to the analysis, respondents firmly feel that their companies show a high degree of dedication to stakeholder engagement, placing a strong emphasis on long-term cooperation, communication, and inclusion. Meaningful participation and strategic alignment with stakeholder expectations are indicated by higher ratings for participation in decision-making, performance improvement, and alignment of engagement initiatives with organizational mission and vision. While engagement is high, there are still opportunities to improve inclusivity and responsiveness to stakeholder needs, according to slightly lower ratings for stakeholder satisfaction and feedback responsiveness. Stakeholder engagement is widely acknowledged as a fundamental organizational strength that supports performance, community relations, and accountability, as evidenced by the consistency of responses.

These results are consistent with Alshukri et al. (2024), who connected stakeholder inclusion to learning and value creation, and Wanzallah et al. (2024), who highlighted the significance of communication in maintaining stakeholder relationships. They also support the findings of Ripoll et al. (2025), who demonstrated that engagement fosters loyalty and trust. Overall, the results confirm that stakeholder engagement based on openness, communication, and active participation greatly enhances organizational sustainability and success; however, Tor et al. (2024) suggest that improvements in satisfaction consistency may still be advantageous.

4.1.3 Descriptive Analysis for Strategic Leadership

The study assessed the role of strategic leadership in domains like knowledge management, change management, and decision-making efficacy. Table 3 reflects the findings of the study.

Table 3 Descriptive analysis for Strategic Leadership

Question Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Our leadership effectively manages organizational change to enhance adaptability.	200	4.28	0.74
Leaders make timely and well-informed decisions that guide organizational direction.	200	4.17	0.78
Leadership promotes knowledge sharing and continuous learning among employees.	200	4.03	0.80
Leaders clearly communicate the organization's strategic goals and vision to all staff.	200	4.10	0.77
The leadership team demonstrates integrity, accountability, and transparency in decision-making.	200	4.22	0.76
Our leaders encourage innovation and empower staff to contribute to strategic objectives.	200	4.15	0.79
Leadership ensures alignment between departmental activities and organizational strategy.	200	4.18	0.75
The organization's leaders effectively manage and resolve conflicts to maintain team cohesion.	200	4.05	0.81
Leadership actively monitors and responds to changes in the external business environment.	200	4.11	0.78
The leadership style within the organization fosters collaboration and teamwork.	200	4.09	0.80
Aggregate Mean	200	**4.14**	**0.78**

Strong agreement was found among respondents that union leadership is strategically effective, actively managing change, making well-informed decisions, and guaranteeing alignment between operational functions and overarching organizational strategy. The ability of leaders to steer organizations through changing environments was demonstrated by their effectiveness in adaptation and change management. Stronger collaborative and learning mechanisms are needed to improve internal cohesion and continuous improvement, as evidenced by slightly lower perceptions of knowledge sharing and conflict resolution. These results support the claim made by Jaleha et al. (2018) that strategic leadership improves organizational agility in dynamic settings.

While Nasir et al. (2022) discovered that transformational leadership supports long-term competitiveness through innovation and structural adaptation, Ahsan (2025) similarly highlighted that effective leaders foster ongoing learning, creativity, and flexibility. Bornay et al. (2025), who demonstrated that organizational learning and innovation are strengthened under strategic leadership, thereby improving adaptability and performance, further support these conclusions. All things considered, the findings show that strategic leadership through communication, decision-making, and learning techniques is essential to improving cooperative union performance, innovation, and adaptability.

4.1.4 Descriptive Analysis for Organizational Performance

An overview of the organization's performance in terms of customer satisfaction, competitiveness, innovation, and the accomplishment of strategic goals is given in this section. Findings of the study are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Descriptive Analysis for Organizational Performance

Question Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The organization consistently achieves its strategic goals.	200	4.31	0.82
There is effective communication between management and employees.	200	4.25	0.80
Employees understand the organization's goals and how their roles contribute.	200	4.20	0.83
Our organization’s performance has improved over the past three years.	200	4.18	0.81
The organization has clear performance measurement metrics.	200	4.15	0.79
Stakeholder communication is timely and effective.	200	4.22	0.84
Our products meet market quality and customer expectations.	200	4.27	0.82
Product success rates have increased due to effective strategy implementation.	200	4.19	0.80
The organization maintains a strong reputation in its industry.	200	4.23	0.79
There is a direct link between organizational performance and customer satisfaction.	200	4.24	0.81
The organization regularly assesses and improves its operational efficiency.	**200**	**4.23**	**0.76**

The study showed that the majority of respondents strongly agreed that the organizations maintain a steady trajectory of improvement over time, consistently meet performance objectives, and exhibit a clear understanding of strategic goals. The idea that strategic clarity, market alignment, and internal operational efficiency drive organizational performance is supported by high ratings on statements pertaining to strategy execution, product quality, reputation, and customer satisfaction. These findings are aligned with Jaleha et al. (2018), who demonstrated that strategic leadership facilitates adaptability and performance. These results are consistent with those of Jaleha et al. (2018), who showed how strategic leadership promotes performance and flexibility.

They also support Ahsan's (2025) claim that leadership that encourages innovation and learning strengthens commitment to organizational goals, as evidenced by employees' high regard for goal comprehension. Furthermore, Nasir et al. (2022), who discovered that transformational leadership promotes sustainable competitive advantage through technological and structural change, are supported by the connection between innovation and performance. According to Bornay et al. (2025), the respondents' opinions support the idea that learning and strategic leadership enhance dynamic capabilities, allowing for ongoing development. These findings corroborate Guliad's (2024) claim that high organizational performance is closely associated with strategic management practices, such as planning, leadership, and stakeholder engagement.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

The study focused on exploring the predictive impact of strategic leadership, stakeholder engagement, and strategic planning on the performance of Kenyan coffee cooperatives. The regression analysis indicated that there was a strong positive correlation between the strategic management practices and the organizational performance with a correlation coefficient of R = 0.812 and R 2 = 0.659 and therefore, the above variables might explain about 66 percent of the variation in performance. The model was never weak, which was verified by the adjusted R 2 of 0.648.

The analysis of the coefficients revealed that the strategic leadership has the strongest predictive value, where a one-unit rise leads to an improvement in the performance of 0.421 units, then the stakeholder engagement (0.293) and the strategic planning (0.256). The standardized coefficients also proved the relative influence of every variable (Based on 0.468 of strategic leadership, 0.317 of stakeholder engagement and 0.286 of strategic planning). All the predictors were found to be statistically significant ($p < 0.01$) which proves that they have a strong positive impact on the performance outcomes.

The ANOVA outcome confirmed the importance of the model (F (3,196) = 123.45, p = 0.001) showing that the impact of the independent variables had a significant effect on the performance of the organization. These results indicate that coffee cooperatives that have visionary leaders, stakeholders' involvement and proper strategic planning are more likely to realise high performance, such as increased operational efficiency, innovativeness and stakeholder satisfaction.

Altogether, the findings emphasize that strategic leadership is one of the strategic performance drivers as it helps to align resources, encourage innovation, and shape decision-making. The involvement of stakeholders enhances accountability and cooperation, whereas strategic planning helps to provide efficient use of resources and long-term sustainability. All these strategic management practices are important in improving the performance of an organization hence the significance of well-coordinated and combined strategies in the cooperative environment.

4.3 Test of Hypothesis

The hypothesis test was conducted to determine the significance of the relationship between the strategic leadership, stakeholder engagement, strategic planning, and the organization performance at 0.05 level of significance. Figure in Table 4.12 illustrates the findings that all three independent variables have a significant predictive ability of organizational performance separately and together. The total regression equation was found to be significant (F (3,196) = 123.45, $p < 0.001$) and it demonstrated that, strategic leadership, stakeholder engagement, and strategic planning are all the factors that affect the performance of coffee cooperatives.

Strategic leadership had the most positive impact on the organizational performance (B = 0.421, β = 0.468, t = 6.48, $p < 0.001$), then the stakeholder engagement (B = 0.293, 3 = 0.317, t = 4.07, p = 0.001) and the strategic planning (B = 0.256, 3 = 0.286, t = 3.71, p = These three predictors collectively gave 65.9% of the variance in the organization performance (R 2 = 0.659) which is an important contribution towards the organizational success.

The results are in line with the available theoretical frameworks. Strategic leadership impact supports Strategic Leadership Theory that also highlights the importance of leaders in directing, motivating and improving performance of teams (Boal & Hooijberg, 2001; Rowe, 2001; Ireland and Hutt, 2005). Stakeholder Theory is supported by the positive impact of stakeholder engagement, which makes the inclusion of stakeholder interests to enhance cooperation, accountability, and trust possible (Freeman, 1984; Macleod and Clarke, 2009; Aaltonen, 2011). Likewise, the relevance of Strategic Management Theory based on the idea that strategic planning helps to improve the alignment of the goals and resources to achieve efficiency in operations and goal achievement, is justified by the powerful role of strategic planning (Ansoff, 1991; Bryson, 2018; Poister *et al.*, 2010).

All these findings show that organizations that combine visionary leadership, active stakeholder engagement, and well-organized strategic planning have a higher chance of performing at a high level, maintain flexibility, and be sustainable. The results provide a strong point to the need to integrate these strategic management practices in order to maximize organizational effectiveness.

5.0 Conclusion

The analysis results reveal that strategic leadership, stakeholder engagement, and strategic planning are the most significant predeterminants of organizational performance among coffee cooperative unions in Kenya. The findings indicate that these three factors are not only significant but complementary to each other with strategic planning being the most powerful. To provide an effective operation of coffee cooperative unions, their stronger competitiveness, and their sustainable existence in the long run, effective strategic planning, stakeholder involvement, and visionary leadership should be prioritized. The paper also points out the importance of leadership in the achievement of success in organizations through mobilization of resources, alignment of actions to goals and interests of stakeholders as evidenced by the Balanced Scorecard, Stakeholder, Competitive Advantage and Resource-Based View theories. Strategic management practices coupled with leadership capacity therefore need to be integrated to enhance performance and maintain growth in the cooperative union industry.

6.0 Recommendations

In light of the research findings, it is advisable that the coffee cooperative unions in Kenya improve their strategic management practices to drive organizational performance. Unions are urged to enhance their strategy planning to make sure that the normal operations are in line with the long-term goals. The strategic plans must be participatory, evidence-based and updated regularly to adapt to the dynamic conditions in the market and the environment. Implementation of Balanced Scorecard model can help measure both financial and non-financial performance indicators in order to achieve sustainable organizational results.

Trust, cooperation, and co-ownership of organizational strategies can be achieved by involving stakeholders using participatory systems of governance such as farmers, employees, and external partners. The Stakeholder Theory states that this broad engagement makes the stakeholders more accepting and committed, which leads to the further establishment of strategic initiatives.

The research also suggests the application of transformational and visionary leadership in every level of the management. Companies ought to concentrate on leadership competence development and staff motivation by rewarding and recognizing employees. Leadership and good use of the internal resources such as human capital, technology and member networks, as suggested by the Competitive Advantage Theory and the Resource-Based View, have the power to generate competitive advantage and build organizational competencies. Investment in knowledge management, innovation, and operational efficiency are very important to international and domestic competitiveness.

Lastly, coffee cooperatives should be supported by the government agencies, collaborative regulatory bodies by implementing policies, capacity building programs, leadership training and reforms in governance bodies. These will make sure that the coffee cooperative unions embrace viable strategic models that are anchored on effective leadership, stakeholder participation, and a capture planning process which will eventually lead into innovation, good governance and a sustainable future of the cooperative industry in Kenya.

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