



## INFLUENCE OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP ON THE PERFORMANCE OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE AGENCIES IN KENYA

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### Abstract

Strategic leadership plays a pivotal role in the effective implementation of strategy and achievement of institutional goals, especially within complex public sector organizations. This study examined the influence of strategic leadership on the performance of agencies under the National Council on the Administration of Justice (NCAJ) in Kenya. The research was motivated by persistent challenges within the justice system, including poor inter-agency coordination, delays in case resolution, and limited responsiveness to stakeholder needs—despite the existence of strategic plans. Using a descriptive correlational survey design, the study collected data from 164 respondents drawn from 36 institutions affiliated with NCAJ, comprising both state and non-state actors. Strategic leadership was assessed in terms of visionary leadership, employee empowerment, and leader agility. The findings revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between strategic leadership and organizational performance, demonstrating that effective leadership practices contribute to improved service delivery, responsiveness, and institutional accountability. The study further established that the regulatory environment moderately influences this relationship. Based on these findings, the study recommends enhancing visionary leadership, promoting inclusive decision-making, and strengthening leadership development programs across NCAJ agencies to foster adaptive governance and improved justice sector outcomes.

**Key Words:** Strategic Leadership, Performance, Agencies under the National Council on the Administration of Justice (NCAJ)

## **Background of the Study**

Strategic leadership is a critical enabler of effective strategy implementation and organizational success, particularly in dynamic and multifaceted sectors such as the administration of justice. It encompasses the ability of leaders to establish a compelling vision, foster alignment around strategic goals, and mobilize organizational resources toward achieving long-term performance outcomes (Lear, 2012; Mahdi & Almsafir, 2013). In the public sector, where organizations must navigate regulatory complexity, political oversight, and shifting stakeholder expectations, strategic leadership is vital in steering institutions through change and ensuring responsiveness to evolving societal needs (Bryson, 2018).

Within the Kenyan context, the National Council on the Administration of Justice (NCAJ) was established under Section 34 of the Judicial Service Act No. 1 of 2011 to coordinate and harmonize the efforts of key justice sector stakeholders. These include the Judiciary, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Kenya Police Service, the Law Society of Kenya, and other civil society and oversight institutions (Judiciary of Kenya, 2020). Despite the existence of strategic plans and reform frameworks, justice sector agencies under the NCAJ continue to grapple with systemic inefficiencies such as case backlogs, weak inter-agency coordination, and public dissatisfaction with legal outcomes (Transparency International Kenya, 2022).

Several studies have pointed to strategic leadership as a foundational driver of institutional transformation, highlighting its role in shaping organizational culture, enhancing accountability, and improving service delivery (Nwachukwu et al., 2019; Isaac, Nkaabu, & Muema, 2021). Visionary leaders are particularly crucial in rallying teams around common goals, fostering innovation, and ensuring organizational adaptability in the face of changing environments. However, in Kenya's justice sector, there remains limited empirical research on the specific impact of strategic leadership practices on the performance of NCAJ agencies. Furthermore, the moderating role of the regulatory environment—comprising legal mandates, governance frameworks, and policy constraints—has not been thoroughly examined in the strategic leadership-performance nexus.

This study was therefore motivated by the need to bridge this knowledge gap by empirically assessing how strategic leadership influences performance outcomes within NCAJ agencies. It also sought to explore the extent to which the regulatory environment moderates this relationship. By focusing on visionary articulation, employee empowerment, and adaptive leadership practices, the research aims to generate actionable insights for strengthening leadership capacities across justice institutions in Kenya, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness, efficiency, and responsiveness of the sector.

## **Statement of the Problem**

The National Council on the Administration of Justice (NCAJ) was established to enhance coordination, efficiency, and accountability across justice sector institutions in Kenya. Despite the development of strategic plans, such as the NCAJ Strategic Plans for 2014–2021 and 2021–2026, persistent performance challenges remain. These include delayed case resolutions, inconsistent inter-agency collaboration, low conviction rates in criminal justice, and limited access to legal services for marginalized populations (NCAJ, 2022; Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, 2021). These inefficiencies continue to undermine public trust in the justice system and hinder the realization of equitable justice delivery.

A major underlying factor behind these challenges is the ineffective implementation of strategy within justice institutions. Strategic leadership, which plays a central role in articulating vision, mobilizing resources, and steering institutional reform, appears to be underutilized or inconsistently applied across NCAJ agencies. Research indicates that public institutions often

suffer from leadership gaps characterized by limited delegation, weak communication, resistance to innovation, and fragmented decision-making (Buya, 2019; Nwachukwu et al., 2019). Without strong strategic leadership, organizational objectives are poorly aligned with operational realities, leading to strategic drift and diminished performance.

While several studies have explored leadership in the private sector and among multinational corporations, empirical investigations focused on strategic leadership within Kenya's public justice sector remain scarce. More importantly, few studies have examined how external regulatory frameworks such as legal mandates and governance structures moderate the relationship between strategic leadership and institutional performance. This oversight limits the contextual understanding of how leadership functions in highly regulated environments like the justice sector.

This study therefore sought to address these gaps by examining the influence of strategic leadership on the performance of agencies under the NCAJ. It also assessed the moderating role of the regulatory environment in shaping this relationship. The goal was to generate evidence-based insights that can inform leadership development, policy formulation, and institutional reforms aimed at improving performance in the administration of justice in Kenya.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of this study was to assess the influence of strategic leadership on the performance of agencies under the National Council on the Administration of Justice (NCAJ) in Kenya.

The specific objectives of the study were:

1. To examine the relationship between strategic leadership and the performance of the National Council on the Administration of Justice agencies in Kenya.
2. To determine the moderating effect of the regulatory environment on the relationship between strategic leadership and the performance of NCAJ agencies.

### **Hypothesis**

- H01:** There is no significant relationship of strategic leadership on performance of National Council on the Administration of Justice Agencies in Kenya
- H02:** There is no significant moderating influence of the regulatory environment on the relationship between strategic leadership and performance of the National Council on the Administration of Justice Agencies in Kenya.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theoretical Review**

#### **Upper Echelons Theory**

The upper echelon theory is a management theory developed by David C Hambrick and P. Mason in 1984 who tried to explain the correlation between the organizational outcome and managerial background characteristics. Thus, its states that Upper echelons theory states that top management team members' characteristics, including past experiences, values, and personalities, affect their strategic and organizational decisions. These characteristics can impact how top management teams scan their environments and select factors from their limited field of vision for use in decision-making (Herman & Smith, 2014). The main question that inspired upper Echelon theory as an organization is a reflection of its top managers was that why do organizations act as they do. (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). (Hambrick & Mason, 1984) Assert, "Organizational outcomes are viewed as reflections of the values and cognitive

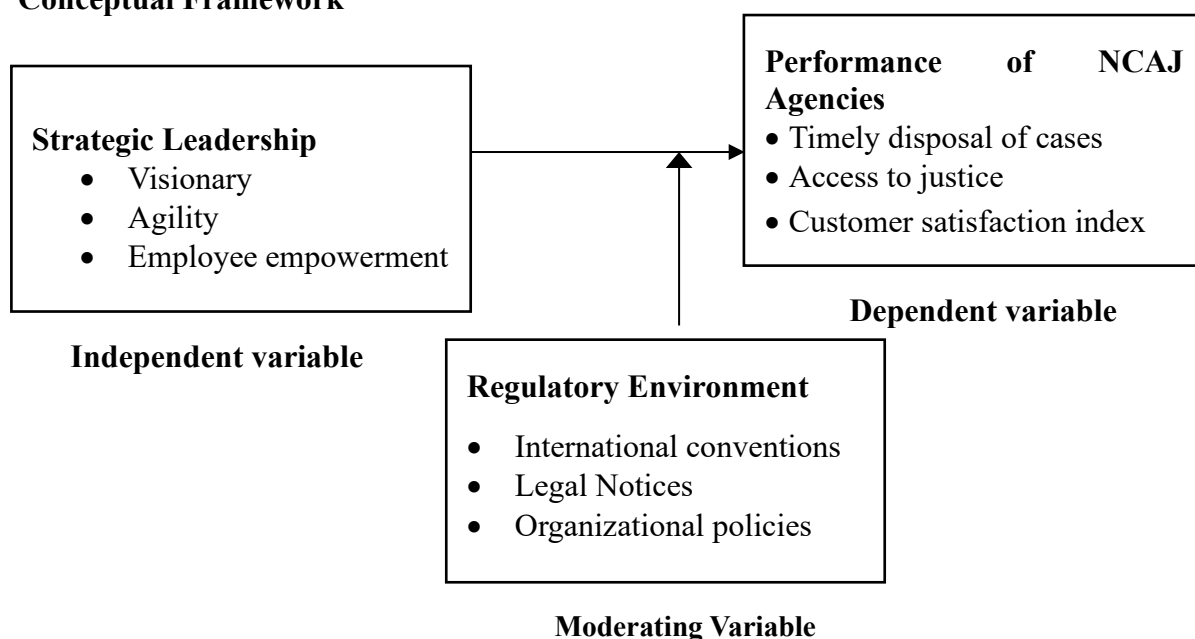
bases of powerful actors in the organization. It is expected that, to some extent, such linkages can be detected empirically”. The implication of managerial discretion for upper echelon theory is straightforward and profound: upper echelons theory offers good predictions of organizational outcomes in direct proportion to how much managerial discretion exists.

Executive job demands stem from three sets of factors; task challenges (difficult strategic conditions), performance challenges (e.g., demanding board) and executive aspirations (e.g., strong personal desire to deliver maximum performance) (Bonelli, 2014). The greater the executive job demands, the stronger the relationship between executive characteristics and strategic choices (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). They fronted a new emphasis on the power and the influence of the top senior managers such as the Chief Executive Officers and the Chief Financial Officers. The theory is grounded on the assumption that key senior persons in an organization influence the organization’s outcome depending on their knowledge, expertise, and experience (Hambrick & Mason, 1984).

Carpenter et al. (2004), as cited by (Ng'ang'a, 2020) argued that the ability or kind of support and influence of the senior leaders is controlled by factors such as team processes, incentives, and integration with others in the environment. Therefore, the external environment is not the only determinant of the organization's activities and outcomes but that of the individuals too. The decisions and strategies are usually biased and subjective because they are made by human beings whose ability to perceive the environment is limited to what they can see, value, beliefs, preferences, education, and experience. As a result, those individuals’ characteristics are reflected by strategic choices that influence firms’ strategic behavior (Hambrick & Mason, 1984).

This theory applies to the study by explaining how the strategic leadership of NCAJ agencies influences performance in justice administration. The effectiveness of justice sector agencies depends on the ability of their leaders—such as judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement officials—to develop and implement policies that enhance efficiency and fairness in the justice system. The theory helps in understanding how leadership traits contribute to the formulation and implementation of justice sector reforms. It also provides insights into how decision-making processes in NCAJ agencies affect inter-agency collaboration, case backlog reduction, and access to justice.

### Conceptual Framework



**Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework**

## **Strategic Leadership**

Strategic leadership can be defined as “the leader’s ability to predict and maintain flexibility and to empower others to create strategic change as necessary” (Hitt, Ireland & Hoskisson, 2009). It is multi-functional and relates to managing others as well as organizations in managing the challenges of today’s globalized business environment. Strategic leadership also requires expertise in managing both internal and external business environment and engage in a complex information processing.

Top team management has been adopted by strategic leadership theorists to refer to the relatively small group of the most influential executive at the apex of an organization, usually the CEO and those who report directly to (Sydney, Hambrick, & Cannella 2009). (Alexander, 1985; Lare-Mankki, 1994; Beer & Eisenstat, 2000) as cited by Waichigo (2014), the success or failure of strategy implementation is with the involvement or lack of involvement of the top managers in an organization. They further note that the concept of involvement can be defined as participation by members at different organizational levels during the action planning, decision making, and implementation stages.

The degree of involvement and, by extension, the degree at which the participation is adequate or inadequate is a matter of perception by employees, middle-level managers, top management teams, and other stakeholders in the strategy implementation process. Waichigo (2014) Considers TMTs as management teams in leading positions of an already operating firm with high involvement in the strategic decision-making process. TMT plays a crucial role in being the strategic decision-making unit for the organization and, as such, the strategic choice and performance in an organization. The decisions and behavior of the top team will be influenced and informed by the TMT's perception of the reality facing the organization (Waichigo, 2014). Chief executives operate at the boundary between their organization and the external environment. They gather information from the outside, conveying information, impressions, and reassurances to the outside. They align the organization with the current and expected external environment; they try to modify the environment (Sydney, Hambrick, & Cannella, 2009).

Sydney, Hambrick, and Cannella (2009) contend that there are two major classes of personal characteristics that constitute an executive's orientation. First are psychological properties such as values, cognitive models, and other elements of personality. These characteristics provide a basis from which the executive filters and interprets stimuli, and they dispose the executive toward certain choices. Miller and Droge (1986) found that CEOs in a sample of companies differed significantly in their need for achievement, an element of personality. The greater the CEO's need for achievement, the greater the organization's structural centralization and formalization, reflecting- the authors through- the high achiever's strong desire to personally monitor and control all company action and take credit for company success. The second set of characteristics that contribute to an executive's orientation is those observable dimensions of the person's experiences—such as functional background, company tenure, and formal education.

Carpenter et al. (2004), as cited by (Ng'ang'a, 2020) argued that the ability or kind of support and influence of the senior leaders is controlled by factors such as team processes, incentives, and integration with others in the environment. Top management team members’ characteristics, including past experiences, values, and personalities, affect their strategic and organizational decisions can impact how top management teams scan their environments and select factors from their limited field of vision for use in decision-making (Herman & Smith, 2014).

Key senior persons in an organization can have the ability to influence the organization's outcome depending on their knowledge, expertise, and experience. (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). Barney (1991), Warnerfelt (1984), Hamel and Prahalal (1994), and (Peteraf, 1993) underscore the importance of resources and capabilities in helping organizations and institutions in achieving the strategic advantage and effectiveness. Prior studies in strategic management literature suggests that Leadership style, structural adaptation, human resources (Sorooshian, Norzima, Yusof, & Rosnah, 2010), organizational culture (Isaac, Nkaabu, & Muema, 2024), strategy structure and system (Adwet, 2022), financial resources, policy and employee commitment (Nwachukwu, Hieu, Chladkova, & Fadeyi, 2019) are important strategy implementation drivers that affect positively or negatively on performance.

### **Regulatory Environment**

The regulatory environment comprises the legal, policy, and institutional frameworks that govern the operations of organizations at both national and international levels. These frameworks can be mandatory, coercive, or voluntary (Center for Integrity in the Defence Sector, 2015). National laws, international treaties, government directives, and institutional policies collectively shape the compliance obligations and operational boundaries for organizations (Oketch, Kilika, & Kinyua, 2020). Regulations serve to maintain legal and political stability, ensuring fairness, transparency, and accountability in various sectors, including the administration of justice.

In Kenya, the Judiciary's mandate is derived from Article 159 of the Constitution, which emphasizes the resolution of disputes through judicial mechanisms. Additionally, Section 34 of the Judicial Service Act (Judiciary, 2020) establishes the National Council on the Administration of Justice (NCAJ) as a high-level policymaking, implementation, and oversight mechanism for the justice sector. The NCAJ brings together key state and non-state actors involved in justice administration, including the Judiciary, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, National Police Service, and civil society organizations.

The regulatory environment significantly impacts the performance of justice sector agencies by influencing institutional mandates, funding sources, compliance requirements, and reporting frameworks. While regulations provide operational guidance, their effectiveness varies based on enforcement, interpretation, and institutional capacity. As such, the regulatory framework indirectly influences organizational efficiency, inter-agency collaboration, and strategic implementation within the NCAJ-affiliated agencies (Scott, 2013; Oketch et al., 2020).

### **Organizational Performance**

Organizational performance refers to the extent to which an organization achieves its intended objectives effectively and efficiently. It involves evaluating outcomes against expected results, identifying deviations, and assessing institutional efficiency in delivering its mandate. According to David (2009), as cited by Ng'ang'a (2020), organizational performance is measured through actual output compared to goals and objectives. Similarly, Hutchinson and Gul (2004), as cited by Adwet (2022), note that performance measurements can be accounting-based or market-based, depending on the nature of the organization. However, for public sector institutions such as the National Council on the Administration of Justice (NCAJ), performance is primarily evaluated through service quality, efficiency, and effectiveness rather than financial or market-based metrics.

The NCAJ is mandated to provide a coordinated, efficient, and consultative approach to justice administration and legal system reform in Kenya. Its primary role is to oversee and facilitate the implementation of justice-related policies, enhance institutional collaboration, and address systemic challenges within the justice sector. As a multi-agency platform, it ensures strategic planning and operational alignment among its member agencies, which include the Judiciary,

the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the National Police Service, and other key actors in the justice sector. Given its coordination role, NCAJ's performance is assessed based on its ability to streamline justice processes, implement reforms, and enhance access to justice.

In this study, the performance of NCAJ agencies is measured using three key indicators: timely disposal of cases, access to justice, and customer satisfaction. The timely disposal of cases reflects the efficiency of judicial processes in reducing case backlogs and ensuring prompt resolution of legal matters. Access to justice measures the extent to which legal services are available, particularly to marginalized and vulnerable groups. Customer satisfaction evaluates public perception and stakeholder feedback regarding the efficiency, fairness, and transparency of justice services.

Since NCAJ is a governmental body focused on justice administration, its performance evaluation is based on service quality rather than financial profitability. Performance measures include resource utilization, program implementation, operational efficiency, stakeholder engagement, and compliance with policy frameworks. Furthermore, NCAJ's effectiveness is reflected in its ability to implement and monitor justice sector reforms, coordinate institutional efforts, and ensure adherence to legal and policy frameworks governing the justice system.

By aligning its strategic objectives with legal and policy reforms, NCAJ ensures that justice sector institutions work cohesively to deliver on their mandates. Performance assessment, therefore, extends beyond internal operational efficiency to include inter-agency coordination, policy implementation, and citizen satisfaction with justice services. These parameters provide a holistic measure of NCAJ's impact in driving reforms and enhancing justice sector performance in Kenya.

### **Empirical Review**

Rahman, et al., (2020) conducted a study on the Impact of Strategic leadership on organizational performance, strategic orientation and operational strategy in automobile industry in Malaysia. The study found that there is a direct and positive relationship between strategic leadership operational excellence, strategic orientation and business performance. Endogenous constructs of strategic orientation were measured by the capability to create a strategy as well as to execute the strategy; cost management, integration and product differentiation measured operational excellence while organizational performance was measured by EPS and Return on Asset (ROA). The study used exploratory data analysis to summarize the main characteristics of individual variables. Descriptive statistics was used to describe data as well as means and standard deviations. Inferential statistics was used to make inferences on the relationship between the constructs of strategic leadership and operational strategy as well as organizational performance. They recommended that future researchers examine the impact of strategic leadership in the operational strategy and performance in different business sectors, as well as in public organizations, in order to have an all-inclusive view of the impact of strategic leadership and performance.

Onyinye, (2024) conducted a study in Strategic leadership in public sector administration in Nigeria. The research considered the critical role of public sector administration to the functionality of a society, noting that the major determinant for public sector success is effective leadership. The purpose of the qualitative phenomenological study was to identify how leadership ineffectiveness could be addressed in public administration in Nigeria and consider the implications of adopting a different approach to improve effectiveness. The study was informed by a dearth of literature on leadership in public sector administration especially in Nigeria. It was underpinned by leadership theory especially strategic leadership. The researcher used a case study of Tertiary Education Trust Fund. Data was collected through face-to-face interviews of 17 staff. The same was analyzed using content analysis. The study

revealed that there exist a pseudo leadership and blame avoidance behavior which were found to be detrimental to public sector efficiency.

Kitonga (2024) conducted research on strategic leadership practices and organizational performance in not-for-profit organization in Nairobi County in Kenya. The study used convergent mixed method research design. The target population of the study was 1475 not-for-profit organizations in Nairobi County. Data in this study was collected through the use of survey questionnaire for quantitative data while interviews were used for qualitative data. Data was analyzed by use of both descriptive and inferential statistics by help of SPSS version 21 tool. The study found that there is a significant positive correlation between strategic leadership practices in general and organizational performance in not-for-profit organization. Specifically, the study findings established positive correlations between determining strategic direction, developing human capital, ethical practices, strategic control and organization performance.

Nyamao, (2022) conducted a study on the effect of strategic leadership on the performance of small and medium enterprises in Kenya. Descriptive survey design was used. The target population consisted of 3,001 registered SMEs in Kenya. 301 SMEs were selected as a sample using stratified sampling technique. The study findings revealed that the strategic leadership practices included corporate strategic direction, effectively managed corporate resource portfolio, emphasized organizational culture, ethical practices and organizational controls that are balanced. Measures of organizational performance such as customer satisfaction, net profit margin, high annual revenue and low annual employee turnover were also studied. Therefore, the study concluded that strategic leadership positively affects the performance of SMEs in Kenya.

Khuong and Hoang (2022) did a review on the empirical research on leadership and firm performance. A total of 60 empirical papers published during the period 2002 to 2021 was retrieved through exhaustive manual searches of online databases. A matrix table was developed to extract and organize information from the retrieved articles. The findings revealed four main key themes. First, the topic of leadership and firm performance has been mostly quantitatively examined in many countries and industries. Second, different leadership approaches have been found to ameliorate FP and transformational leadership remains the most commonly used approach. Third, innovation, learning, and culture were the most common mediators of the leadership- firm performance relationship. Fourth, support for innovation, competitive intensity, firm size, leaders' trust, and justice orientation have been found to moderate the effect of leadership on firm performance.

Lumumba, (2021) conducted a study on the strategic leadership and organizational performance: an empirical overview. The study main objective revolved around the influence of strategic leadership on organizational performance an empirical review. The theories deemed key for the study were agency theory and upper echelon theory. The design that was key for the study was descriptive survey. The findings suggested significant relationship between strategic leadership and organizational performance. The theoretical undertakings involving theories like agency and upper echelon as suggested in the study received a boost in form of confirming their postulates and thus developed further. The study concluded that the competitiveness of firms can be well enhanced when leadership at strategic level are aligned to the organizational objectives thus leading to improved organizational performance.

Okibo, Kitonga and Muema, (2022) focused on the strategic leadership and organizational performance in not-for-profit organizations in Nairobi County in Kenya. The study established a significant positive relationship between strategic leadership variables and organizational performance. The findings demonstrate that if not-for-profit leaders use well the strategic leadership, they are likely to improve their organizational performance significantly. The study concluded that for not-for-profits organizational performance to improve there is evidence that



developing human capital is related to organizational performance. Hence the more strategic leaders get involved in developing human capital, the greater the not for-profits organizational performance.

Abimbola, Omowumi and Dele, (2024) conducted a study on the influence of leadership styles on employees' performance: a study of selected private universities in Ogun state, Nigeria. Specifically, the study focused on the influence of charismatic leadership, transactional leadership and transformational leadership on employee performance. Descriptive survey research design was adopted as the study guide. Multi stage sampling technique was used for this study due to the varied characteristics of the institutions. Five hundred (500) copies of questionnaire were administered to academic and non-academic staff in the selected private universities out of which four hundred and thirty-five (435) copies were filled and returned. The study revealed that only transactional leadership style has no significant influence on employees' performance while charismatic and transformational leadership styles have positive and significant influences on employees' performance

Sofi (2022) conducted a study on the impact of leadership on organizational performance: An empirical assessment of banking sector in Jammu and Kashmir. The focus was on six major leadership styles transformational, transactional, autocratic, charismatic, bureaucratic and democratic. The descriptive survey research design was operated in order to accomplish the above stated objectives. The model was tested on the 290 respondents consisting of branch heads, executive level and senior staff of banking sector organizations in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. All the data analysis was operated through the statistical packages for social sciences (SPSS) and analysis of moment structures (AMOS) Version 20. The findings of the study revealed that only transformational leadership style has significant direct impact on organizational performance while other leadership styles showed insignificant impact. Moreover, the transformational leadership was the more dominant form of leadership style prevailing in the concerned banking organizations of Jammu and Kashmir, India.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a positivist research philosophy, which supports the use of structured methodologies and objective measurements to understand observable phenomena. Positivism emphasizes empirical evidence and allows the use of statistical tools to test hypotheses and relationships between variables (Creswell, 2009; Bryman, 2012). Given the study's focus on measurable leadership attributes—vision, empowerment, and agility—this approach was deemed suitable for examining their impact on organizational performance.

A descriptive correlational survey design was employed to examine the relationship between strategic leadership and organizational performance within NCAJ agencies. The descriptive aspect facilitated a comprehensive overview of current leadership practices, while the correlational approach allowed for statistical testing of the strength and direction of associations between strategic leadership and performance metrics.

The target population comprised top and middle-level managers drawn from the 36 state and non-state institutions under the NCAJ umbrella. These included agencies such as the Judiciary, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Law Society of Kenya, and Kenya Police Service, among others. The unit of analysis was the organizational level (NCAJ agency), and the unit of observation was individuals in leadership roles within these agencies. A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure proportional representation of top and middle-level managers. From a target population of 231 officers (36 CEOs and 195 regional managers), the sample size was calculated using Yamane's (1967) formula, resulting in a final sample size of 164 respondents. Stratified sampling ensured the distinct leadership strata were proportionally represented in the data.

Primary data was collected through semi-structured questionnaires targeting strategic leadership traits such as visionary communication, delegation practices, and leader adaptability. Both open and closed-ended questions were used to collect quantitative and qualitative insights. Secondary data was sourced from NCAJ strategic documents, annual reports, and regulatory publications.

A pilot study was conducted on 10% of the sample (16 respondents) to test the reliability and clarity of the questionnaire. Cronbach's Alpha values ranging between 0.797 and 0.993 indicated high internal consistency. Construct validity was assessed using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), while face validity was confirmed through expert review by strategic management scholars. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) and inferential statistics, specifically Pearson's correlation and multiple linear regression to determine the strength and significance of the relationship between strategic leadership and organizational performance. Hierarchical regression analysis was used to assess the moderating role of the regulatory environment.

Ethical approval was obtained from relevant bodies, including the university and the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). Respondents were assured of confidentiality, informed consent was obtained, and participation was entirely voluntary. Data was securely stored and used solely for academic purposes.

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Descriptive Statistics**

#### **Strategic Leadership and Performance of NCAJ Agencies**

The study's first objective was to establish the influence of strategic leadership on the performance of the National Council on the Administration of Justice Agencies in Kenya. The respondents were asked to indicate their role in the organizations. From the data, some of the respondents stated that they were guiding investigations officers, some stated that they were court prosecutors and head of the stations. Others stated that they were regional managers, some of the respondents also stated that they were officers commanding station (OCS), some of them were heads of the sub-counties, while others stated that they were departmental heads. In addition, some responses were drawn from the clerks, supervisor dispute resolution, others stated that they were administrators, others were management and control of personnel while others were gathered from maintenance of law and order geared towards the safety and security of the Nation.

The researcher further sought to assess the type of leadership style adopted in the organization, from the data it was evident that majority (90.6%) of the organization practice participative and a combination of transactional and transformational styles of leadership. Majority of the respondents indicated that most of the leaders practice effective leadership. This is an implication that participative and a combination of transactional and transformational styles are the most practiced leadership styles in the Organization.

The respondents were asked to rate their degree of agreement on influence of strategic leadership on the performance of the National Council on the Administration of Justice Agencies in Kenya. From the findings 74% of the respondents strongly agreed that it is important to access the internal capabilities required for the long-term success of the organization, 26% of the respondents agreed while none of the respondents were undecided, disagreed nor strongly disagree that it is important to access the internal capabilities required for the long-term success of the organization with a mean of 3.887 and a standard deviation of 0.907. According to Allameh and Kumar (2014) capabilities tend to arise or expand over time as a firm takes actions that build on its strategic resources. The organization selects and recruits

highly talented and skilled employees that will translate to the long-term internal capabilities for the long-term success of the organization.

The internal capability of the organization provided excellent customer service by building on its strong organizational culture. Capabilities are important in part because they are how organizations capture the potential value that resources offer. Capabilities are needed to bundle, manage, and otherwise exploit resources in a manner that provides value added to customers and creates value for the organization. In addition, 56% of the respondents strongly agreed that the organization keeps abreast of and monitors the external environmental driving factors to inform decisions, 37% agreed, 7% were undecided while none of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the organization keeps abreast of and monitors the external environmental driving factors to inform decisions with a mean of 4.113 and a standard deviation of 0.870.

The findings are in agreement with those of Arli, Bauer, and Palmatier, (2024) who found that organizations monitor external factors such as customers, competition, the economy, technology, political and social conditions, and resources that influence the performance of the organization. Even though the external environment occurs outside of an organization, it can have a significant influence on its current operations, growth, and long-term sustainability. Ignoring external forces can be a detrimental mistake for managers to make. As such, it is imperative that managers continually monitor and adapt to the external environment, working to make proactive changes earlier on rather than having to take a reactive approach, which can lead to a vastly different outcome.

Moreover, 78% of respondents strongly agreed that shared commitment has a large extent to the long-term vision and mission of the organization, 19% agreed that shared commitment has a large extent to the long-term vision and mission of the organization while 3% were undecided. This implies that shared commitment has a large extent to the long-term vision and mission of the organization with a mean of 4.516 and a standard deviation of 0.565. The findings of the study are consistent with those of Holley (2013) which found that organizational commitment regulates and builds relationships in the organization. At the same time, it creates more supports in the work process of employees through intermediary relationships between management levels and employees. On this basis, it promotes work motivation and performance, which ultimately lead to attaining an organization's predetermined vision and goals as stated in the strategic plan.

From the findings, 57% of the respondents strongly agreed that the organization is open to change and ready to adapt to the current and future external environment, 37% agreed that the organization is open to change and ready to adapt to the current and future external environment, while 6% were undecided. This implies that the organization is open to change and ready to adapt to the current and future external environment with a mean of 4.500 and a standard deviation of 0.621. The findings concur with the findings of Ipapi (2024) who found that an organization that is open to change reaps benefits such as retaining a competitive edge and also remaining relevant in the business area. Change encourages innovation, develops skills, develops staff and leads to better business opportunities, and improves staff morale.

Furthermore, 87% of the respondents strongly agreed that encouraging teamwork and cooperation as means of delivering service to members of the public, 13% agreed that encouraging teamwork and cooperation as means of delivering service to members of the public while none of the respondents were undecided, disagreed nor strongly disagreed that encouraging teamwork and cooperation as means of delivering service to members of the public with a mean of 4.145 and a standard deviation of 0.866. According to Namasaka (2024), teamwork is important for organizations, especially in today's digital world. Organizations that emphasize teamwork innovate faster, see mistakes more quickly, find better solutions to

problems, and attain higher productivity. Improving teamwork aims to increase productivity and performance for the benefit of the organization.

From the findings 67% of the respondents strongly agreed that it is essential that we build strategic relationships that will enhance the organization's performance, 33% agreed while none of the respondents were undecided, disagreed nor strongly disagreed that it is essential that we build strategic relationships that will enhance the organization's performance with a mean of 4.387 and a standard deviation of 0.869. The standard deviation varied from 0.565 to 0.907, showing that there was little variance from the mean among the respondents. The results support those of Ndubisi (2024) who found that Strategic relationships allow partners to scale quickly, build innovative solutions for their customers, enter new markets, and pool valuable expertise and resources. A strategic relationship is a game changer in a business environment that values speed and innovation.

The study findings concurred with Upper Echelons Theory, which suggests that top executives view their situations through their own personalized lenses. This individualized construal of strategic situations arises because of differences among executives in their experiences, values, personalities, and other human factors. The theory focuses on the characteristics of top executives as determinants of strategic choices and, through these choices, of organizational performance. The upper-echelon members collectively represent the most vital human capital of the organization. The theory suggests that individual characteristics influence differing strategic decisions by top management teams. The results are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Strategic Leadership on the Performance**

<b>Statement Strategic Leadership</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>		
It is important to access the internal capabilities required for the long-term success of the organization.	74	26	0	0	0	3.887	0.907
The organization keeps abreast of and monitors the external environmental driving factors to inform decisions.	56	37	7	0	0	4.113	0.87
Shared commitment has a large extent to the long-term vision and mission of the organization	78	19	3	0	0	4.516	0.565
The organization is open to change and ready to adapt to the current and future external environment	57	37	6	0	0	4.5	0.621
Encouraging teamwork and cooperation as means of delivering service to members of the public	87	13	0	0	0	4.145	0.866
It is essential that we build strategic relationships that will enhance the organization's performance	67	33	0	0	0	4.387	0.869

**Source: Field Data, (2023)**

### **Performance of National Council of Administration of Justice Agencies**

The researcher sought to establish the performance of NCAJ agencies. From the findings, 36% strongly agreed that the organization they work for handles tasks and assignments within the stipulated time frame in the service charter, 36% agreed that the organization they work for handles tasks and assignments within the stipulated time frame in the service charter, 14% were undecided while 14% of the respondents disagreed while none of the respondents strongly agreed that the organization they work for handles tasks and assignments within the stipulated time frame in the service charter with a mean of 4.258 and a standard deviation of 0.8886. Moreover, 57% strongly agreed that it takes the organization considerably more time complete matters under its charge, 29% agreed, while 14% strongly disagreed that it takes the organization considerably more time complete matters under its charge with a mean of 4.403

and a standard deviation of 0.557 that it takes the organization considerably more time complete matters under its charge.

The findings are in line with those of Triga, (2020) the project tasks are completed on time, which encourages a smooth flow of work, deadlines help the organization to collaborate toward achieving a shared goal, and to keep complex, multistage projects on track. From the findings 43 of the respondents strongly agreed that there is an increase in the number of cases reported in our organization in the last five 5 years, 50% agreed while 7% strongly disagreed that there is an increase in the number of cases reported in our organization in the last five 5 years with a mean of 4.452 and a standard deviation of 0.592. Moreover, 29% of the respondents strongly agreed that the matters pending before courts are completed within a reasonable time 50% agreed that the matters pending before courts are completed within a reasonable time, 14% were undecided while 7% strongly disagreed that the matters pending before courts are completed within a reasonable time with a mean of 4.452 and a standard deviation of 0.592.

The study findings disagree with those of Alushula, (2019) who found that close to half of the unresolved cases in Kenyan courts have dragged on for more than three years, a new report shows, piling pressure on ongoing reforms at the Judiciary to improve service delivery. An estimated 45 per cent of the 327,928 backlog cases as at June 2020 had been before the courts for more than three years, with the Magistrate Court and High Court registering the highest overall backlog. In Kenya, the maximum desirable timeline that a case ought to have been finalized from the date of filing is one year. Any case that exceeds one year before a court is considered a backlog. From the findings, 29% of the respondents strongly agreed that the number of complaints against the organization and staff has increased in the last 5 years, 21% agreed, 43% disagreed, while 7% strongly disagreed that the number of complaints against the organization and staff has increased in the last 5 years with a mean of 4.403 and a standard deviation of 0.557. Finally, 50% of the respondents strongly agreed that the organization receives cooperation from its customers while undertaking its operations in the realization of its mandate, 29% agreed, 14% were undecided while 7% of the respondents strongly disagreed that the organization receives cooperation from its customers while undertaking its operations in the realization of its mandate with a mean of 4.145 and a standard deviation of 0.807. The results are consistent with those of Omasete (2014), who found that customer service is important because it inspires customer loyalty and makes employees' jobs easier. This, in turn, helps businesses grow. By providing great customer service, organizations can recover customer acquisition costs, retain talent, and foster brand loyalty. The findings are as summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2: Performance of NCAJ agencies in Kenya**

<b>Statements on Strategy Implementation Drivers</b>	<b>SA (%)</b>	<b>A (%)</b>	<b>U (%)</b>	<b>D (%)</b>	<b>SD (%)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std</b>
Tasks are completed within timelines specified in the service charter.	36	36	14	14	0	4.258	0.886
Delays are experienced in handling matters under the agency's charge.							
The number of cases handled has increased in the last five years.	57	29	0	0	14	4.403	0.557
Pending matters are resolved within a reasonable period.							
Complaints against the agency/staff have increased over the past five years.	43	50	0	0	7	4.145	0.807
Clients cooperate effectively with the agency in achieving its mandate.	29	50	14	0	7	4.452	0.592

## Inferential Statistics: Strategic Leadership and Organizational Performance

This section presents inferential statistics evaluating the relationship between Strategic Leadership and the performance of National Council on the Administration of Justice (NCAJ) agencies in Kenya. Multiple regression analysis was applied to assess the strength and direction of this relationship and to determine whether the Regulatory Environment moderates the effect of strategic leadership on agency performance.

### Regression Model Summary

The initial regression model revealed a strong positive relationship between strategic leadership and organizational performance. As shown in Table 3, strategic leadership alone accounted for a significant proportion of the variance in performance indicators such as timely case resolution, access to justice, and customer satisfaction.

**Table 3: Simple Regression Model Summary for Strategic Leadership**

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
0.924	0.853	0.843	0.25651

The R value of 0.924 indicates a strong positive correlation, while the R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.853 suggests that strategic leadership, alongside other control variables, explained 85.3% of the variation in performance. This confirms that leadership plays a substantial role in influencing outcomes in public-sector justice institutions.

### Coefficients: Influence of Strategic Leadership

The regression coefficient for strategic leadership was statistically significant, indicating that improvements in strategic leadership practices are associated with better agency performance.

**Table 4: Regression Coefficients – Strategic Leadership**

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Standard Error	t-value	Sig. (p)
Strategic Leadership	0.281	0.064	4.371	0.000

The coefficient ( $\beta = 0.281$ ,  $p < 0.005$ ) confirms that a one-unit increase in strategic leadership is associated with a 0.281 unit increase in performance, all else held constant. These findings align with the work of Kitonga (2024) and Rahman et al. (2020), who emphasized that leadership qualities such as visionary thinking, ethical conduct, and staff empowerment directly influence organizational success.

### Moderating Role of the Regulatory Environment

The study also evaluated whether the Regulatory Environment modifies the relationship between strategic leadership and performance. A hierarchical regression model was constructed, introducing an interaction term between strategic leadership and the regulatory environment.

**Table 5: Moderation Results – Strategic Leadership × Regulatory Environment**

Interaction Term				Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	Standard Error	t-value	Sig. (p)
Strategic Leadership	×	Reg. Environment		0.028	0.010	2.933	0.005

The interaction term was statistically significant ( $\beta = 0.028$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ), indicating that the effectiveness of strategic leadership is enhanced in a supportive regulatory environment. In essence, legal clarity, institutional oversight, and policy alignment empower leaders to implement strategy more effectively. This finding supports Contingency Theory (Donaldson, 2001), which asserts that organizational effectiveness depends on alignment between internal practices and external conditions.

### Model Fit with Moderation

The final model, integrating strategic leadership and the regulatory moderator, explained even more variance in performance, with  $R^2$  increasing to 0.908.

**Table 6: Model Summary – Moderated Regression**

Model	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
1	0.853	0.843	0.25651
2 (w/ moderator)	0.908	0.892	0.21263

This 5.5% improvement in explanatory power highlights the importance of contextual alignment between leadership actions and regulatory structures. Leaders operate more effectively when legal and institutional frameworks enable clarity, delegation, innovation, and accountability.

The regression analysis clearly shows that Strategic Leadership is a key determinant of performance among NCAJ agencies. This relationship becomes even stronger when the Regulatory Environment is favorable, illustrating the critical interplay between internal leadership capability and external governance structures. Therefore, leadership development efforts should be coupled with regulatory reforms to unlock the full performance potential of justice institutions in Kenya.

### Hypothesis Testing: Strategic Leadership

#### Hypothesis 1

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant influence of strategic leadership on the performance of the National Council on the Administration of Justice (NCAJ) agencies in Kenya.

The first hypothesis examined whether strategic leadership significantly affects performance outcomes within NCAJ agencies. As per the regression analysis results, the p-value associated with strategic leadership was 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 significance level. Accordingly, the null hypothesis was rejected, leading to the conclusion that strategic leadership has a statistically significant and positive influence on organizational performance.

This finding aligns with Motlokoa (2022), who asserts that effective strategic leaders influence organizational outcomes through a deep understanding of institutional dynamics, proactive environmental scanning, and meaningful employee engagement. Strategic leadership within the justice sector—manifested through visionary direction, ethical behavior, and internal alignment—emerges as a pivotal driver for timely case resolution, enhanced access to justice, and citizen satisfaction.

#### Moderating Influence of Regulatory Environment

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant moderating influence of the regulatory environment on the relationship between strategic leadership and performance of the NCAJ agencies.

The fifth hypothesis tested whether the regulatory environment moderates the relationship between strategic leadership and performance. The interaction term (Strategic Leadership  $\times$  Regulatory Environment) yielded a p-value of 0.005, which is statistically significant at the 5%

level. Additionally, the  $R^2$  value increased by 0.8% ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.008$ ) after including the moderating variable, confirming a positive and significant moderating effect.

This means that in a well-regulated environment—characterized by clear mandates, procedural consistency, and legal support—strategic leadership exerts an even stronger influence on performance outcomes. These findings are consistent with Oketch, Kilika, and Muigai (2020), who note that public institutions achieve optimal performance when internal strategies are implemented within a conducive regulatory framework.

**Table 7: Summary of Null Hypotheses Test – Strategic Leadership Focus**

Null Hypothesis	Alternative Hypothesis	Criteria	Interpretation
There is no significant influence of strategic leadership on performance of NCAJ agencies.	There is a significant influence of strategic leadership on performance of NCAJ agencies.	$p < 0.05$	<b>Null Rejected</b>
There is no significant moderating influence of the regulatory environment on the relationship between strategic leadership and performance of NCAJ agencies.	There is a significant moderating influence of the regulatory environment on the relationship between strategic leadership and performance of NCAJ agencies.	$p < 0.05$	<b>Null Rejected</b>

*Source: Field Data, 2023*

## SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Summary of Key Findings

The findings established that strategic leadership significantly and positively influences the performance of agencies under the NCAJ. Leaders who articulate a clear vision, champion ethical behavior, and foster internal alignment enable better institutional outcomes, including improved access to justice and reduced case backlogs.

Additionally, the regulatory environment plays a moderating role, enhancing the efficacy of leadership efforts. Agencies functioning within supportive legal frameworks benefit from improved clarity, decision-making autonomy, and coordinated implementation of strategic initiatives.

### Conclusion on Strategic Leadership and Performance

The study concluded that strategic leadership is a critical internal capability that drives long-term success in the justice sector. Effective strategic leaders monitor external legal and social drivers, build committed teams, adapt to change, and align organizational goals with public expectations.

Moreover, the conclusion reaffirmed that strategic relationships, openness to change, and staff cooperation are essential components of a leadership model that improves organizational performance. The statistical correlation ( $r = .382$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) confirmed a moderate but significant relationship between strategic leadership and NCAJ agency performance.

The presence of a favorable regulatory environment further strengthens this relationship, providing legal structure and operational clarity that allow leadership actions to translate into measurable public service outcomes.



## **Contributions to the Body of Knowledge**

This research offers several valuable contributions to the field of strategic management and public sector administration. Empirically, it demonstrates that strategic leadership is a critical determinant of performance within public justice institutions in Kenya. The study also introduces a regulatory perspective, showing that the legal environment moderates the effectiveness of internal leadership strategies.

These findings expand existing theories such as Institutional Theory (Scott, 2004), by demonstrating how formal institutions shape internal leadership outcomes. The research also supports Contingency Theory by showing that effective leadership must be contextualized within the prevailing regulatory and institutional conditions. For scholars and practitioners alike, this study provides a nuanced understanding of how internal leadership capabilities interact with external regulatory forces to influence public sector performance.

## **Recommendations**

### **Recommendations for Policy and Practice**

In light of the findings, the study recommends that leaders within NCAJ agencies actively articulate and share a unified vision and mission. Doing so will foster a sense of shared purpose and direction among staff. Strategic leadership should also be institutionalized through regular leadership development programs, emphasizing ethics, adaptability, and stakeholder engagement.

Additionally, agencies must invest in cultivating leadership practices that are responsive to external regulatory expectations. This involves aligning organizational strategies with statutory mandates and ensuring that leaders are well-versed in compliance and policy requirements. Strengthening the regulatory framework—through reform and policy coherence—will further support the implementation of strategic decisions.

### **Recommendations for Government and Institutions**

The study recommends that the government, in collaboration with NCAJ leadership, enhance the institutional capacity of justice agencies by developing supportive regulatory structures. These structures should align with international standards and best practices on governance and transparency. Moreover, governments should regularly assess the performance of regulatory bodies to ensure they are enabling, not hindering, the implementation of strategic leadership decisions.

To sustain performance improvements, NCAJ agencies must also prioritize internal leadership pipelines, ensuring succession planning and talent development are integral parts of institutional growth. Engagement with legal and policy experts will be essential to keep leadership strategies aligned with evolving regulatory expectations.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

While this study focused solely on the role of strategic leadership within NCAJ agencies, further research could explore how other leadership dimensions—such as transactional and transformational leadership—impact performance in other public sector contexts. Future studies may also investigate how variations in regional governance structures affect the leadership-performance relationship across counties in Kenya.

Moreover, longitudinal studies would help in assessing the sustainability of leadership-driven reforms over time. Incorporating qualitative methods such as interviews and focus groups could enrich our understanding of how leaders perceive and respond to regulatory challenges.

Expanding this inquiry beyond justice agencies to include other public sectors would also strengthen the generalizability of these findings.

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