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THE INFLUENCE OF EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATION IN SHAPING ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE: EVIDENCE FROM KENYA AIRWAYS

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ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

A RESEARCH DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION AND COMPUTER STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF A MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES OF ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY.

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DECLARATION

This dissertation is my original work and has not been presented for the award of a degree in any other degree in any other university. No part of this dissertation should be reproduced without prior authority of the author and/or St. Paul's University.

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DEDICATION

This research dissertation is dedicated to my family as a token of appreciation for the moral support and patience they accord me while doing the research proposal.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration.....ii

Acknowledgement.....iii

Dedication.....iv

Table of Contents.....v

Abstract.....xi

Chapter One.....1

1.1 Introduction.....1

1.2 Background of the Study.....1

1.3 Statement Of The Problem.....7

1.4 Purpose of The Study.....9

1.5 Specific Research Objectives.....9

1.6 Research Questions.....9

1.7 Rationale or Justification of The Study.....10

1.8 Significance of The Study.....11

1.10 Scope of The Study.....13

1.11 Limitations And Delimitations of The Study.....14

1.12 Definition of Key Terms.....15

1.13 Chapter Summary.....16

Chapter Two.....18

Literature Review.....18

2.1 Introduction.....18

2.2 Theoretical Framework.....18

2.4 Empirical Review.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

2.4.1 Communication Channels Used By Executive Leaders And Their Influence On Employee Organisational Commitment.....27

2.4.2 Dominant Communication Styles Used By Leaders And Their Influence On Employee Engagement In Company Matters With Customers.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

2.4.3 Communication Strategies Employed By Leaders And Their Role In Building Employee Trust In The Brand.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

2.4.4 The Influence Of Leadership Communication Patterns On Employee Loyalty To The Brand.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

2.5 Research Gap Analysis.....41

2.6 Conceptual Framework.....43

2.7 Summary of Chapter.....44

Chapter Three.....46

Research Methodology.....46

3.1 Introduction.....46

3.2 Research Design.....46

3.3 Philosophical Underpinning.....47

3.4 Population.....48

3.5 Target Population.....48

3.5 Sample And Sampling Techniques.....49

3.5.1 Sample Size.....49

3.5.2 Sampling Techniques.....50

3.6 Data Collection Instruments....51
3.7 Reliability....53
3.8 Validity....54
3.9 Data Collection Procedure....54
3.10 Data Analysis Plan....55
3.11 Ethical Considerations....56
3.12 Chapter Summary....57
Chapter Four....59
Data Presentation, Analysis, And Interpretation....59
4.1 Introduction....59
4.2 Response Rate....59
4.3 Analysis Of Demographic Information....61
4.3.1 Gender Of The Respondents....61
4.3.2 Age....61
4.3.3 Education Level....62
4.3.4 Department....62
4.4.4 Job Level....64
4.4.5 Years Of Experience At Kenya Airways....65
4.5 Communication Strategies Used By Executive Leaders At Kenya Airways Plc And Their Influence On Employee Organisational Commitment....66
4.5.1 Executive Communication Strategies....66
4.5.2 Timely Sharing Of Information With Employees....67
4.5.3 Executive Leaders' Use Of Open And Transparent Communication....67

4.5.4 Provision Of Feedback On Organisational Issues....68
4.5.5. Executive Communication Encourages Employee Participation....69
4.5.6 Communication In Ways That Are Easy To Understand....69
4.5.7 Appropriate Use of Communication Channels By Executives....70
4.5.8 Leaders Giving Reasons Behind Major Decisions....71
4.5.9 Channel Used To Receive Most Executive Communication....71
4.6 The Dominant Communication Styles Employed By Executive Leaders At Kenya Airways Plc And Their Impact On Employee Engagement....73
4.6.1 Participative Communication Style....73
4.6.2 Directive Communication Style....74
4.6.3 Supportive Communication Approach....75
4.6.4 Two-Way Communication Style....76
4.6.5 Adaptive Communication Styles....76
4.6.6. Professional And Consistent Communication Styles....77
4.6.7 Transformational Communication Style....78
4.6.8 One-Way/ Transactional Communication Style....78
4.6.9 The Communication Style Most Commonly Used By Executive Leaders At Kenya Airways....79
4.7 The Influence Of Executive Communication Strategies On Employee Trust And Loyalty Within The Organisation....82
4.7.1 Emotional Attachment To Kenya Airways....82
4.7.2 Feeling Of Pride Working For Kenya Airways....83
4.7.3 Loyalty To Continue Working For Kenya Airways....84

4.7.4 Strong Sense Of Belonging To This Organisation.....85
4.7.5 Commitment To The Goals Of Kenya Airways.....86
4.7.6 Willingness To Recommend Kenya Airways As A Good Place To Work.....87
4.7.7 Reasons For An Employee's Increased Engagement At Work.....88
4.7.8 Executive Communication Increase In Leadership Confidence.....89
4.7.9 Loyalty To Kenya Airways Because Of How Leaders Communicate.....90
4.7.10 Employee Level Of Trust In Executive Communication At Kenya Airways.....91
4.8 How Executive Communication Contributes To The Reinforcement And Sustainability Of Organisational Culture At Kenya Airways Plc.....93
4.8.1 How Executive Communication Reflects The Values Of Kenya Airways.....93
4.8.2 Leadership Communication Promoting A Positive Work Culture.....94
4.8.3 Executive Messages Reinforcing Teamwork And Collaboration.....95
4.8.4 Executive Communication Support For Accountability And Discipline.....96
4.8.5 Leadership Communication Helping To Sustain The Organisation's Culture.....97
4.8.6 Leadership Communication Influencing Employees Behavior At Work.....98
4.8.7 Cultural Aspects Most Influenced By Executive Communication.....99
4.8.8 How Executive Communication Influences Organisational Culture Of Kenya Airways 99
4.8.9 Communication Practices By Executive Leaders That Work Best At Kenya Airways 102
4.8.10 Suggested Improvements For Executive Communication At Kenya Airways.....103
4.9 Discussion Of Findings.....105
Chapter Five.....111

Discussions, Conclusions And Recommendations.....111
5.1 Introduction.....111
5.2 Discussion Of Study Findings.....112
5.3 Conclusion.....117
5.4 Recommendations.....119
5.5 Suggestions For Further Study.....121
References.....122
Appendices.....128
Appendix I: Informed Consent Form.....128
Appendix Ii: Research Questionnaire To Employees Across Selected Departments.....129
Appendix Iii Semi-Structured Interview Guide With Executives (Including The Ceo And Directors).....140
Appendix Iv Nacosti Research Permit.....143

ABSTRACT

Organisational culture influences organisational performance, with executive communication shaping shared values, norms, and behaviours. This study examined the influence of executive communication on organisational culture at Kenya Airways (KQ), Africa's flagship carrier, which faces ongoing challenges such as financial losses, labour disputes, and low employee morale, with an evaluation of the leadership communication channels, styles, and strategies and their influence on employee commitment, engagement, trust, and the organisational culture. The specific objectives were: (1) to examine the communication strategies used by executive leaders at Kenya Airways PLC and their influence on employee organisational commitment; (2) to analyse the dominant communication styles employed by executive leaders at Kenya Airways PLC and their impact on employee engagement; (3) to assess the influence of executive communication strategies on employee trust and loyalty within the organisation; and (4) to evaluate how executive communication contributes to the reinforcement and sustainability of organisational culture at Kenya Airways PLC. Guided by Transformational Leadership Theory and Schein's Model of Organisational Culture, the study adopted a mixed-methods approach with a target population of 95 respondents comprising Kenya Airways' top executives and employees. Stratified, random, and purposive sampling were used, with data collected through surveys and interviews. The findings showed that executive communication influences organisational culture at Kenya Airways. Town halls, internal digital platforms and leadership briefings were commonly used communication channels, although their effectiveness varied across employee groups. Transformational communication was perceived as the dominant communication style and was associated with employee trust, engagement and commitment. The findings further showed that transparent, consistent and inclusive communication strengthened cultural alignment, while inconsistent communication and limited employee participation weakened its impact. Additionally, the study concluded that executive communication is a critical driver of organisational culture at Kenya Airways, but its effectiveness depends on consistency, inclusivity, and sustained two-way engagement. It recommended that KQ leadership strengthens feedback systems, tailor communication to different employee segments, and adopt more transformational communication practices to enhance engagement, and cultural sustainability. The study contributes to leadership communication practice at Kenya Airways and to organisational communication literature in the African aviation context.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter lays the foundation for the entire study by comprehensively examining its background, purpose, specific objectives, key research questions, justification for undertaking the research, practical and theoretical significance, and the defined scope and inherent limitations alongside delimitations. It provides a detailed historical and contextual background for the research topic, highlighting the evolving dynamics of executive communication within organisational settings and underscoring the critical significance of this inquiry in today's business landscape/, particularly for entities such as Kenya Airways navigating competitive aviation challenges. The sections that come after will delve deeply into the problem statement, articulating the core issues that necessitate this investigation; the primary objectives that direct the research efforts; and the precisely formulated research questions that will guide data collection, analysis, and interpretation throughout the study.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Leadership communication plays a key role in shaping the culture of an organisation. In contemporary organisations, the way senior leaders convey messages both formally and informally has become a decisive lever for shaping the underlying values, norms, and assumptions that constitute organisational culture (Schein, 2010). There is a cross-interplay between management, leadership, followership, and communication in organisations (Jones, 2002). Executive communication is no longer limited to press releases or quarterly earnings calls; it now encompasses storytelling, digital engagement, crisis narration, and every day “walk-the-talk” interactions that signal what the organisation means and how it behaves

(Cornelissen, 2020). Research has shown that when executives communicate consistently, transparently, and with emotional intelligence, they embed cultural artefacts that reinforce desired behaviours (Men, 2015; Goleman, 1995). Conversely, mixed or contradictory messages can erode trust and breed subcultures that diverge from strategic intent (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2015).

Globally, research states that leaders are the stewards of any organisation's culture, and this includes how they communicate both intentionally and unintentionally in the organisation and outside the organisation (Jones, 2002). A good or bad culture ultimately establishes the identity of an organisation, and this is often propagated from the top of the hierarchy of the organisation. According to Nelson and Quick (2002), leadership communication appreciates the diversity and attributes of each leader. It also encompasses the worldview of each leader based on their past experiences. These become an asset to the organisation when the culture values diversity of thought and experience.

Leadership communication plays a decisive role in shaping organisational culture worldwide. Senior leaders influence values, norms, and assumptions through both formal and informal communication (Schein, 2010). Modern executive communication extends beyond press releases to include storytelling, digital engagement, crisis narration, and every day "walk-the-talk" interactions (Cornelissen, 2020). When leaders communicate consistently and transparently, they embed cultural artefacts that reinforce desired behaviours (Men, 2015; Goleman, 1995). Conversely, contradictory messages erode trust and foster fragmented subcultures (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2015). Globally, leaders are recognised as stewards of organisational culture, shaping identity through intentional and unintentional communication (Jones, 2002).

During situations of change, while leadership's role in fostering organisational adaptability is widely acknowledged, practical implementation faces significant hurdles. A key issue is the disconnect between leaders' stated promises and actual practices, which breeds cynicism and erodes cultural change efforts. This misalignment often sparks passive resistance or outright opposition among employees, turning potential supporters into disengaged skeptics. Kotter and Heskett (1992) emphasize that truly adaptive cultures demand sustained commitment and leaders who model behaviours matching their words. Such cultures thrive only when change is backed by consistent actions rather than mere rhetoric or campaigns; otherwise, reforms remain superficial, failing to deliver genuine, lasting adaptability.

Regionally**,** African airlines operate in volatile environments marked by fuel price fluctuations, limited infrastructure, and competition from global carriers. In this context, executive communication is critical for sustaining organisational resilience. For example, Ethiopian Airlines has demonstrated how consistent leadership communication can reinforce a strong organisational culture, enabling growth despite industry turbulence. Regional studies emphasise that African leaders must balance diverse communication styles and cultural contingencies to maintain employee trust and engagement (Nelson & Quick, 2002; Al Hakim, Sigita, & Irfan, 2022).

Examining how leaders enhance organisational responsiveness is crucial in volatile, uncertain, and rapidly changing environments. As unfamiliar challenges arise, the need for cultural agility intensifies. Leadership goes beyond crisis management; it's about equipping the organisation to thrive amid disruption using the appropriate communication strategies. In today's ever-shifting world, studying leadership's communication role in fostering cultural responsiveness has evolved from an academic interest into a vital strategy for long-term organisational survival and growth

(Al Hakim, Sigita, & Irfan, 2022). Therefore, the shaping of an organisational culture that remains responsive to change is fundamentally intertwined with leadership communication.

Locally, Kenya Airways (KQ), founded in 1977, has evolved into one of Africa's flagship carriers (Kenya Airways, 2022). Its early reputation for "African hospitality" (Mabiala & Ochieng, 2022) was later challenged by financial crises, governance disputes, and intense competition (Njoroge, 2019). Leadership transitions brought shifts in communication practices, from centralised briefings to digital platforms such as "KQ360" (Kenya Airways, 2021). While these initiatives aimed to flatten hierarchies and encourage dialogue, internal surveys reveal mixed perceptions: 68% of pilots report feeling well-informed about safety policies, yet only 42% of ground staff feel their daily challenges are addressed (Kenya Airways Staff Survey, 2023).

The airline industry provides a vivid laboratory for examining executive communication. Safety, service, and performance cultures are interdependent, and the tone set by executives directly influences employee morale and operational outcomes (Reason, 1997; Jiang & Huo, 2021). At KQ, executive communication has oscillated between consultative and transactional styles, shaping employee trust, loyalty, and cultural alignment. Initiatives such as CEO Allan Kilavuka's public updates and participatory gestures have humanised leadership (Okoth, 2023), yet contradictions — such as cost-cutting narratives during COVID-19 — highlight unresolved gaps in communication coherence (Mabiala & Ochieng, 2022).

Kenya Airways (KQ), founded in 1977 after the dissolution of East African Airways, a joint venture between the Kenyan government and the British airline, has evolved into one of Africa's flagship carriers (Kenya Airways, 2022). The airline's early years were marked by rapid expansion, a strong national identity, and a reputation for "African hospitality" (Mabiala &

Ochieng, 2022). By the late 1990s, KQ had entered the strategic alliance era, joining the Star Alliance in 2017, and diversified its route network to Europe, Asia, and the Americas.

However, the turn of the millennium brought a confluence of challenges: volatile fuel prices, intense competition from Gulf carriers, and internal governance disputes (Njoroge, 2019). In 2004, the airline suffered a high-profile crash of Flight 431, prompting a series of safety reforms and a renewed emphasis on transparency (International Civil Aviation Organisation [ICAO], 2005). The subsequent decade witnessed a succession of CEOs, each attempting to reposition the airline through restructuring, fleet modernisation, and brand rejuvenation (Kariuki, 2020).

These leadership changes were accompanied by shifts in communication practice, from the highly centralized, top-down briefings of the early 2000s to a more digital, stakeholder-oriented approach under the current Managing Director (Kenya Airways, 2023). The oscillation between communication styles offers a natural experiment for investigating how executive messaging translates into cultural realities across the organisation.

Organisational culture in airlines is often described as a "safety culture" (Reason, 1997) overlaid with service culture and performance culture (Jiang & Huo, 2021). The safety culture dimension concerns attitudes toward risk, reporting of incidents, and adherence to Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). The service culture reflects the degree to which employees internalize the brand promise of hospitality, punctuality, and reliability. Finally, the performance culture captures orientation toward cost efficiency, revenue generation, and market competitiveness.

These three dimensions are interdependent. A strong safety culture can bolster service quality by empowering crews to make swift, informed decisions, while an overly aggressive performance culture may undermine safety if it incentivizes shortcuts (Stoltz, 2018). The interplay of these subcultures is largely mediated by the messages conveyed by senior leaders (Hofmann & Stetzer,

1998). When executives publicly celebrate safety milestones, allocate resources for training, and reward frontline staff for customer compliments, they signal that safety and service are co-equal priorities (Men & Stacks, 2013). Conversely, if communication focuses predominantly on revenue targets without acknowledging safety metrics, a misalignment emerges that can precipitate cultural fragmentation (Kalu, 2019).

Since 2015, Kenya Airways has undertaken a digital transformation of its communication architecture. The launch of the "KQ360" platform integrated internal blogs, live streaming of executive town halls, and a mobile app for frontline staff to receive real-time updates (Kenya Airways, 2021). This shift was intended to flatten hierarchies, encourage two-way dialogue, and embed a culture of agility (Muthoni, 2022).

Simultaneously, the airline's executive public relations strategy has become more proactive.

The immediate former CEO, Allan Kilavuka, regularly featured in the "Airline Recovery Path" videos on YouTube, providing updates on route expansions, sustainability initiatives, and corporate social responsibility projects (Kenya Airways, 2023). These efforts have been praised for humanizing the leadership and fostering a sense of collective purpose among employees (Okoth, 2023).

However, internal surveys reveal mixed reactions. While 68 % of pilots report feeling "well-informed" about safety policies, only 42 % of ground-handling staff feel that executive communications address their day-to-day challenges (Kenya Airways Staff Survey, 2023). Moreover, the "culture of cost-cutting" narrative that surfaced during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic created tension between financial imperatives and frontline safety concerns (Mabiala & Ochieng, 2022). These contradictions suggest that communication coherence across diverse occupational groups remains an unresolved challenge.

Effective leadership communication is crucial, particularly in sectors like aviation where the stakes are extraordinarily high. The airline industry, exemplified by Kenya Airways (KQ), serves as an ideal case study due to its evolving challenges and the critical role of executive communication in managing both brand image and operational integrity. Founded in 1977, KQ has journeyed through expansion, crises, and rebranding efforts while grappling with intense competition and economic fluctuations (Kenya Airways, 2022).

Kenya Airways thus offers a compelling case for studying how executive communication influences organisational culture. Its history of crises, reforms, and evolving communication strategies underscores the urgent need to understand how leadership messaging can foster trust, engagement, and cultural sustainability in African aviation.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Executive communication has increasingly been recognised as an important mechanism through which organisational leaders communicate strategic priorities, reinforce shared values and influence employee perceptions and behaviour. However, existing research has largely examined leadership communication and organisational culture in broad organisational settings, with comparatively limited attention to how executive communication practices shape organisational culture within the African aviation context.

Kenya Airways (KQ) has faced persistent organisational challenges despite multiple strategic interventions such as privatisation in the 1990s and the KLM joint venture. The airline continues to grapple with financial losses, labour unrest, governance lapses, and high employee turnover, all of which signal deep morale erosion and cultural fragmentation. Strikes, threats of industrial action, and public disputes between management and staff highlight a breakdown in trust and

communication. Employees report disengagement, cynicism, and resistance to change, suggesting that executive communication has not effectively addressed systemic opacity, inconsistent strategy rollout, or weak feedback mechanisms. These organisational problems underscore the urgent need for leadership communication that is transparent, consistent, and responsive to employee concerns.

At the same time, there exists a knowledge gap in academic research. While literature affirms that executive communication plays a central role in shaping organisational culture, embedding values, reinforcing norms, and building trust, limited studies have examined this relationship in the African aviation context, and specifically within Kenya Airways. Although previous studies acknowledge the relationship between leadership communication and organisational culture, limited empirical attention has been given to how specific executive communication channels, styles and strategies influence employee commitment, engagement, trust and loyalty within African airlines. This creates both a practical and scholarly gap. Practically, Kenya Airways operates in a complex environment characterised by financial, operational and employee-relations challenges, making effective executive communication particularly important for maintaining organisational alignment. Scholarly, there is insufficient context-specific evidence explaining how executive communication shapes organisational culture within Kenya Airways. This study therefore examines the relationship between executive communication and organisational culture at Kenya Airways, with particular attention to communication strategies, styles and channels and their influence on employee commitment, engagement, trust and loyalty.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to analyse the influence of Executive Communication on Organisational Culture using Kenya Airways as a case study.

1.5 SPECIFIC RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The following objectives will guide the study:

1. To examine the communication strategies used by executive leaders at Kenya Airways PLC and their influence on employee organisational commitment.
2. To analyse the dominant communication styles employed by executive leaders at Kenya Airways PLC and their impact on employee engagement.
3. To assess the influence of executive communication strategies on employee trust and loyalty within the organisation.
4. To evaluate how executive communication contributes to the reinforcement and sustainability of organisational culture at Kenya Airways PLC.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What communication strategies are used by executive leaders at Kenya Airways PLC, and how do they influence employee organisational commitment?
2. What dominant communication styles are employed by executive leaders at Kenya Airways PLC, and how do they affect employee engagement?
3. How do executive communication strategies influence employee trust and loyalty within the organisation?
4. How does executive communication contribute to the reinforcement and sustainability of organisational culture at Kenya Airways PLC?

1.7 RATIONALE OR JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

Over the past two decades, KQ has navigated turbulence ranging from economic sanctions and fleet reductions to a landmark partnership with Air France-KLM and, most recently, a Covid-19-induced collapse in passenger demand. Each of these crises demanded swift, coherent, and credible messages from the executive suite, yet the observable outcomes- shifts in employee morale, changes in service standards, and fluctuations in brand perception- have been uneven.

Understanding how and why executive communication shapes organisational culture at Kenya Airways (KQ) transcends academic inquiry, offering concrete strategic advantages for the airline's long-term viability in Africa's dynamic aviation market. One key benefit lies in strategic resilience: by pinpointing communication practices that cultivate a learning-oriented, safety-first culture, KQ can better endure disruptions like economic downturns, fuel crises, or pandemics. Transparent executive messaging, such as CEO updates during turbulence, converts uncertainty into collective purpose, enabling swift adaptation where past missteps, like those preceding the 2022 pilots' strikes, bred paralysis (Schein, 2010).

Equally compelling is talent retention, vital in an industry facing chronic shortages of skilled pilots, engineers, and cabin crew. Culture fuelled by authentic leadership communication fosters deep engagement and loyalty, directly tackling KQ's high turnover linked to morale slumps and perceptions of unprofessional "matatu culture." When leaders consistently share vision and respond to feedback, employees feel valued, slashing recruitment expenses and stabilising operations amid labour tensions (Kotter & Heskett, 1992).

Brand equity provides yet another imperative: today's passengers evaluate airlines on authenticity, ethics, and cultural integrity alongside basic service. Executive narratives that harmonise internal values, like safety and innovation, with public commitments can carve out

KQ's competitive edge. Symbolic gestures, from past consultative CEO styles to Allan Kilavuka's 2023 cabin crew participation, gain power through sustained discourse, building passenger trust and loyalty in a saturated market (Deal & Kennedy, 1984).

This study thus bridges a significant literature gap on executive communication in African airlines, where broad analyses of culture and leadership dominate, but neglect targeted CEO mechanisms. By yielding empirical insights into messaging's ties to cultural artefacts and performance outcomes, it enriches theory while arming practitioners with actionable tools for renewal (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018).

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study on the role of executive communication in shaping organisational culture at Kenya Airways (KQ) holds profound theoretical, practical, and contextual significance, addressing a vital yet underexplored dynamic in African aviation management. Theoretically, it will advance organisational behaviour scholarship by bridging gaps in leadership communication literature. While seminal works like Schein (2010) outline culture's layers, artefacts, espoused values, and assumptions, few studies dissect how CEO narratives specifically embed these in crisis-prone sectors.

By examining KQ's context, the research will extend frameworks from Kotter and Heskett (1992) on adaptive cultures and Deal and Kennedy (1984) on communication networks, offering a nuanced model linking executive messaging styles (e.g., transparency, symbolism) to cultural artefacts like rituals and hero myths. This will contribute fresh empirical evidence on how top-down discourse constitutes culture, particularly in emerging markets where Western models often fall short (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018).

Practically, the findings will also equip KQ executives with actionable insights to reverse persistent challenges like financial losses, labour unrest (e.g., 2022 pilots' strikes), and high turnover. Strategic resilience emerges as a key benefit: identifying practices that foster a learning-oriented, safety-first culture, such as consistent strategy cascading, enables KQ to navigate volatility from fuel hikes or pandemics, accelerating initiatives like Project Kifaru. Talent retention gains traction in a skill-scarce industry; transparent feedback loops can counter "matatu culture" critiques, boosting morale and loyalty among pilots and crew, thus slashing recruitment costs. Brand equity strengthens as aligned internal-external messaging builds passenger trust, differentiating KQ amid rivals like Ethiopian Airlines.

Contextually, this research fills a void in African airline research, where studies broadly cover culture or leadership but neglect CEO-specific mechanisms amid privatisation legacies and political influences. Policymakers at Kenya's Transport Ministry and regulators like KCAA will therefore benefit from recommendations enhancing governance. Unions and employees will gain tools to demand accountable communication, mitigating disputes. In the field of academia, the study will offer Academics and peer airlines (e.g., South African Airways) access to a replicable case for volatile contexts.

By illuminating the performance toll of communication gaps, this study will promote cultural renewal for KQ's competitiveness, informing sustainable strategies in Africa's aviation boom. Its implications ripple beyond KQ, guiding leadership in high-stakes, change-intensive industries globally.

1.9 ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is based on the assumption that executive communication at Kenya Airways was intentional, consistent, and influential in shaping organisational culture. It assumed that messages

from top leadership are received, interpreted, and acted upon by employees across different levels of the organisation. The study also assumed that employees were able to reflect honestly on how leadership communication affects their understanding of organisational values, norms, and practices.

Another assumption was that organisational culture at Kenya Airways could be observed through patterns such as employee behaviour, shared values, attitudes toward safety, service delivery, teamwork, and accountability. The study assumes that these cultural attributes are meaningfully influenced by leadership communication rather than by communication alone from external stakeholders or other unrelated factors. It further assumes that the respondents have sufficient knowledge and experience of the organisation to provide valid and reliable information.

The study also assumed that Kenya Airways, despite its changing operational and financial environment, had developed communication practices that could be examined as part of its internal management process. In addition, it assumed that the relationship between executive communication and organisational culture could be studied within the period and context selected without requiring a complete historical reconstruction of the airline's entire development.

Finally, the study assumed that the data collected from the selected respondents would accurately represent the broader situation at Kenya Airways and that the findings would be useful in explaining how executive communication contributes to the shaping of organisational culture.

1.10 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study focuses on the influence of executive communication in shaping organisational culture at Kenya Airways. For the purposes of this research, executive communication is defined

as the formal and informal messaging practices of the airline's top leadership, specifically the chief executive officer, directors, and senior managers.

The scope covers three dimensions: Executives included: The CEO, directors, and senior managers who are directly responsible for strategic decision-making and organisational leadership.

Communication channels: Town hall meetings, internal digital platforms (such as *KQ360*), leadership briefings, memos, emails, and face-to-face interactions. The particular Types of communication examined are strategic communication (vision, mission, long-term goals), Operational communication (day-to-day directives, performance updates) and *Crisis communication* (responses to disruptions such as strikes, accidents, or the COVID-19 pandemic).

The study is limited to Kenya Airways as a case study, with data collected from both executives and employees to capture the two-way dynamics of communication. While the findings are context-specific, they provide insights applicable to other African airlines facing similar organisational and cultural challenges.

1.11 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This research anticipated several limitations. First, access to confidential materials privy only to insiders might be restricted. Certain strategic communications, such as board minutes or merger negotiations at Kenya Airways (KQ), remain classified, potentially limiting a comprehensive view of executive messaging and its cultural impacts. Second, response bias was likely to arise, as employees could soften criticism of senior leadership due to fear of victimisation and other repercussions, despite assurances of anonymity, thereby inflating perceptions of communication effectiveness. Additionally, the generalisability of the findings is constrained, as insights drawn

from KQ's distinctive historical, cultural, and regulatory context may not readily apply to other airlines operating under different conditions.

In response to these limitations, the study incorporated deliberate delimitations to ensure focus, feasibility, and analytical depth. Given restricted access to confidential materials, the study focused on formal and accessible internal communication artefacts, such as memos and executive speeches, which allowed for systematic and consistent analysis. To address potential response bias, the research emphasized documented communication channels rather than relying solely on employee perceptions, thereby strengthening the objectivity of the analysis.

Furthermore, acknowledging the limited generalisability, the study adopted a single-case study design, prioritising rich, context-specific insights over broad statistical generalisations. The scope was further delimited to internal executive communication, excluding external public relations efforts such as media engagements and advertising, to isolate the influence of leadership messaging on organisational culture. Additionally, the study focuses on senior-level executives and their equivalents, on the premise that strategic cultural direction predominantly flows from the organisational apex, rather than mid-level management.

These delimitations were intended to sharpen the investigation into how top-down communication shapes employee commitment, engagement, trust, and performance within KQ, particularly in the context of organisational challenges such as industrial actions and morale concerns.

1.12 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Executive Communication: Refers to the formal and informal communication practices of Kenya Airways' top leadership, specifically the CEO, directors, and senior managers. In this study, executive communication is measured through leadership briefings, town halls, digital

platforms (*KQ360*), memos, and interviews, focusing on transparency, consistency, and responsiveness.

Organisational Culture: Defined as the shared values, norms, and behaviours that guide employee interactions and organisational practices (Schein, 2010). In this study, organisational culture is assessed through employee perceptions of safety, service, and performance culture, as well as alignment with Kenya Airways stated values.

Employee Engagement: Refers to the level of psychological investment employees have in their work and the organisation. Engagement is measured through survey items on participation in decision-making, willingness to recommend KQ as a workplace, and involvement in organisational initiatives.

Employee Commitment: The degree to which employees feel emotionally attached to, and willing to remain with, Kenya Airways. Commitment is measured by indicators such as loyalty, pride in working for KQ, and intention to continue employment.

Trust in Leadership Communication: Defined as employees' confidence in the honesty, transparency, and reliability of executive messages. Trust is measured through perceptions of consistency in communication, openness to feedback, and follow-through on promises.

Employee Loyalty: Refers to the willingness of employees to remain with Kenya Airways and support its goals. Loyalty is measured through survey responses on continued employment, advocacy for KQ as a good place to work, and alignment with organisational objectives.

1.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the background, problem statement, purpose, objectives, research questions, justification, significance, assumptions, scope, limitations, delimitations, and key definitions of the study. It introduced the study on the influence of executive communication on

organisational culture at Kenya Airways, focusing on how communication from senior leaders shaped employee commitment, engagement, trust, and organisational culture.

The chapter situated the study within organisational communication and leadership, demonstrating that executive communication plays a central role in influencing shared values, behaviours, and organisational performance, particularly in the dynamic aviation industry. It also provided the historical and operational context of Kenya Airways, highlighting leadership communication during periods of crisis, restructuring, competition, and organisational change.

The problem statement identified challenges including financial losses, labour tensions, employee dissatisfaction, and cultural fragmentation, establishing the need to examine how executive communication influenced trust, loyalty, engagement, and organisational culture. The study aimed to analyse the communication strategies and styles used by executive leaders, their influence on employee trust and loyalty, and their role in reinforcing organisational culture.

The chapter further explained the justification and significance of the study, noting its contribution to leadership and organisational communication literature within the African aviation context while providing practical insights to strengthen leadership communication and employee relations. Finally, it outlined the assumptions, scope, limitations, delimitations, and key terms, establishing the conceptual and contextual foundation for the chapters that follow.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews the general and empirical literature relevant to executive communication and organisational culture, as well as the theoretical perspectives underpinning the study. It discusses the theoretical framework adopted for the study, anchored in Media Richness Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory. The chapter further reviews general literature on executive communication and organisational culture, examines empirical studies related to the study concepts, and identifies the research gaps arising from the existing literature. It concludes by presenting the conceptual framework illustrating the relationship between executive communication and organisational culture, followed by a summary of the chapter.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided primarily by Transformational Leadership Theory and Schein's Model of Organisational Culture, with Media Richness Theory serving as a supporting lens. Together, these frameworks provide a robust foundation for analysing how executive communication influences organisational culture at Kenya Airways.

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational Leadership Theory, developed by Burns (1978) and expanded by Bass (1985), explains how leaders inspire followers through vision, motivation, intellectual stimulation, and

individualized consideration. Transformational leaders communicate with consistency, emotion, and purpose, thereby shaping employee attitudes, trust, and commitment. This theory is particularly relevant to Kenya Airways, where executives must rebuild morale and loyalty after periods of financial turbulence and governance lapses. Unlike transactional leadership, which secures compliance through directives and rewards, transformational communication fosters cultural cohesion and long-term engagement, outcomes essential in the volatile aviation sector. The theory thus provides a lens for understanding how executive communication can reinforce safety culture, service excellence, and employee alignment with organisational goals.

The theory is based on four central dimensions: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Idealised influence emphasises leaders' ability to model desired values and behaviours; inspirational motivation concerns communicating a compelling vision and sense of purpose; intellectual stimulation encourages employees to question existing practices and consider new approaches; and individualised consideration involves recognising and responding to employees' individual needs. These tenets are relevant to this study because they provide a basis for examining how executive communication may influence employee commitment, engagement, trust and loyalty, and ultimately contribute to organisational culture at Kenya Airways."

Schein's Model of Organisational Culture

Schein (1990) conceptualises organisational culture as comprising three layers: artifacts, espoused values, and basic assumptions. Executive communication directly influences each of these layers. Artifacts include visible practices such as town halls, digital platforms, and leadership briefings; espoused values encompass safety, service, and performance priorities; and basic assumptions reflect deeper beliefs about trust, accountability, and collective identity. By

examining how executives at Kenya Airways communicate across these layers, Schein's model enables a structured analysis of how cultural signals are embedded, reinforced, or reshaped through leadership messaging. This framework is therefore central to the study, as it connects communication practices to the sustainability of organisational culture.

Media Richness Theory (Supporting Lens)

Media Richness Theory, proposed by Daft and Lengel (1986), complements the two core frameworks by explaining how the richness of communication channels affects clarity and trust. Richer media such as face-to-face meetings or live video briefings are better suited for complex, emotionally charged messages, while leaner media such as emails or memos are more appropriate for routine information. At Kenya Airways, this distinction is evident: pilots report feeling well-informed through rich communication channels, whereas ground staff often perceive leaner channels as inadequate (Kenya Airways Staff Survey, 2023). As a supporting lens, Media Richness Theory helps explain how executives' choice of communication channels mediates cultural clarity and employee engagement.

Alternative Theories Considered

Other frameworks, such as Systems Theory and Organisational Culture Theory, were reviewed but not adopted. Systems Theory provides a broad view of organisational interdependence but does not foreground communication as a cultural driver. Organisational Culture Theory offers descriptive typologies but lacks explanatory power for how executive communication actively shapes culture. In contrast, the combined use of Transformational Leadership Theory and Schein's model, supported by Media Richness Theory, offers sharper analytical leverage and contextual relevance.

Contextual Relevance

African airline studies illustrate contrasting outcomes. Ethiopian Airlines demonstrates how consistent executive messaging sustains growth despite industry volatility (Al Hakim, Sigita, & Irfan, 2022). Kenya Airways, however, has faced contradictions between cost-cutting narratives and safety imperatives, which have undermined cultural coherence (Mabiala & Ochieng, 2022). These differences highlight the need for a framework that captures both inspirational leadership and cultural embedding. The integration of Transformational Leadership Theory and Schein's model, with Media Richness Theory as a supporting lens, provides the necessary analytical depth to examine how executive communication shapes organisational culture in the Kenyan aviation context.

2.3 General Literature Review

Executive Communication and Organisational Culture in Aviation

Executive communication plays a central role in shaping organisational culture, particularly in large and complex service organisations such as Kenya Airways. Organisational culture refers to the shared values, norms, beliefs, and behavioural patterns that guide how members think, act, and interpret events within an organisation (Schein, 2010). Schein further explains culture through three layers: visible artefacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions, arguing that culture is reproduced daily through communication practices, stories, rituals, and leadership behaviour (Schein, 2010). Within this perspective, executive communication is not merely information transfer but a symbolic and persuasive process that signals organisational priorities, expectations, and identity (Mishra et al., 2012).

In aviation, this relationship is especially important because airlines operate in environments where safety, coordination, customer experience, and disciplined execution are closely

connected. Senior leaders do not only communicate policy; they also communicate what the organisation values, how it responds to pressure, and what behaviours are rewarded. Communication from the CEO and other executives therefore becomes part of the organisation's cultural architecture. The tone, frequency, and consistency of these messages shape whether employees experience the airline as open, rigid, supportive, or fragmented. In this sense, executive communication is one of the main mechanisms through which culture is sustained or changed.

Theoretical perspectives help explain this link. Leadership–communication–culture frameworks show that communication styles characterised by clarity, transparency, consistency, and relational tone influence internal communication climate, employee trust, and alignment with organisational values (Ndichu, 2020; Ndwiga, 2021). Transformational leadership theory adds that leaders who communicate a compelling vision, motivate employees, and model desired behaviour foster cultural norms around ownership, commitment, and innovation (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Sense-making and symbolic perspectives further indicate that executives use speeches, emails, town halls, and crisis messages to help employees interpret restructuring, targets, or operational change (Weick et al., 2005). In a service-heavy and high-risk setting such as aviation, these communication acts become cultural signals that guide how employees understand their roles.

Communication Styles and Cultural Effects

Communication style is a major part of how executive communication shapes organisational culture. Leaders who communicate in a transformational, participative, and transparent way are more likely to create a culture of inclusion and shared purpose. In contrast, overly directive, top-down, or inconsistent communication can produce compliance without commitment. Studies on

Kenya-based organisations show that clear and consistent communication improves trust, reduces uncertainty, and supports openness and accountability (Ndichu, 2020; Ndwiga, 2021). These findings are especially relevant to Kenya Airways because employees in a complex organisation need structured communication that also leaves room for feedback.

Aviation organisations often rely on cascading communication, where messages move from senior leaders to managers and then to frontline staff. This can work well when the message is coherent and reinforced across levels. However, it can also weaken culture if the message becomes diluted, distorted, or overly bureaucratic. In such cases, employees may hear one thing from executives and experience another in daily practice. That gap can reduce trust and create informal subcultures based on scepticism, survival, or disengagement. In a service setting, this can affect customer care, teamwork, and willingness to support change.

Communication style also shapes how employees experience leadership. When executives are visible, responsive, and willing to explain decisions, employees are more likely to feel included in the organisational mission. This supports a culture of ownership and shared responsibility. When leaders communicate only during crises or through formal directives, employees may view communication as control rather than engagement. For Kenya Airways, where morale and cooperation are important, communication style is therefore not just a managerial preference but a cultural force.

Empirical evidence from aviation and related service sectors supports the connection between executive communication and culture. Research in Kenyan organisations shows that transparent, frequent, and dialogic communication strengthens trust and employee alignment with organisational values (Ndwiga, 2021). Studies also suggest that communication practices influence employee commitment and engagement, both of which are expressions of a strong

organisational culture. Where leaders use multiple channels such as town halls, digital platforms, and feedback systems, employees are more likely to feel informed and connected to the organisation.

Within Kenya Airways specifically, the literature points to the importance of leadership communication in change management and performance improvement. Studies have shown that transformational leadership and effective communication are associated with better employee response to organisational change and greater acceptance of strategic initiatives (Lukor, 2017; Kithinji, 2020). Employees respond more positively when leaders communicate a clear direction, involve them in operational matters, and model the behaviour they expect. In an airline context, this can influence how well safety procedures are followed, how service standards are upheld, and how change is implemented across departments.

Research on Kenya Airways' strategic performance also indicates that organisational culture, leadership communication, and employee attitudes are intertwined. Where leaders communicate in ways that align with organisational expectations, employees are more likely to support reform and maintain service discipline. Where communication is weak or contradictory, resistance and uncertainty increase. This is especially important in aviation because delays, safety concerns, and service failures quickly affect public trust. Executive communication therefore becomes one of the tools through which leadership manages not only information, but also meaning, behaviour, and culture.

Culture as a Strategic Asset

In Kenya Airways, executive communication should be understood as a strategic asset rather than a routine administrative function. It shapes how employees interpret the organisation's identity and how they respond to challenges. In this setting, culture includes safety culture,

service culture, and performance culture, all of which leadership messages shape (Luyai, 2021). When leaders consistently reinforce safety, service excellence, teamwork, and accountability, they create a cultural environment that supports operational performance. When they fail to do so, culture becomes fragmented and less effective.

This is particularly relevant in service organisations because employees interact directly with customers and represent the brand in real time. If executive communication does not support a coherent internal culture, service quality may become uneven. In contrast, when leaders use communication to align employees with the organisation's mission, they strengthen both internal commitment and external performance. For Kenya Airways, this means that executive communication can influence not only morale but also how the airline is experienced by passengers and other stakeholders.

The airline industry also rewards organisations that can adapt quickly while maintaining consistency. Executive communication helps make that adaptation possible by giving employees a shared frame for interpreting change. During restructuring, financial pressure, or operational disruption, leadership messages can reduce anxiety or intensify it. A culture that values openness and trust is more likely to withstand such pressures. This is why the study of executive communication is relevant not only to internal management but also to long-term organisational sustainability.

Despite these insights, the literature on Kenya Airways still focuses more broadly on leadership, change management, performance, and employee communication than on the specific influence of executive communication on organisational culture. There is limited empirical work that systematically examines how the content, style, channels, and frequency of executive communication shape cultural dimensions such as safety culture, customer-service orientation,

and learning culture within the airline (Lukor, 2017; Ndichu, 2020). Most studies treat communication as one part of a broader leadership or performance issue rather than as a central cultural mechanism.

This gap matters because Kenya Airways is a highly visible aviation organisation operating in a context where culture directly affects safety, service, and competitiveness. A focused analysis of executive communication can therefore reveal how senior leaders influence shared meanings, norms, and assumptions across the organisation. It can also help explain why some communication practices build commitment and cohesion while others generate uncertainty or resistance. By narrowing the discussion to Kenya Airways and similar aviation/service settings, the study becomes more relevant, more focused, and more useful for theory and practice.

This review therefore positions executive communication as a critical driver of organisational culture in Kenya Airways. It shows that the relationship between communication and culture is not abstract but operational, shaping how employees work, how leaders are trusted, and how the airline responds to strategic demands. The study contributes by linking leadership communication theory with organisational culture theory in a high-stakes aviation environment, while also highlighting the need for more context-specific empirical evidence.

Kenya Airways Context

Kenya Airways provides a relevant case because it operates in a highly competitive aviation environment where efficiency, safety, customer service, and financial discipline must be managed simultaneously. The airline has undergone strategic reforms, cost rationalisation, and performance-driven restructuring in response to changing market conditions and operational pressures (Lukor, 2017; Luyai, 2021). These changes make executive communication especially important because employees need to understand not only what is changing, but why it matters

and how they are expected to respond. When leadership communication is absent or unclear, employees may interpret change as punitive or confusing rather than strategic.

In Kenya Airways, culture is not a background issue; it is directly connected to operational outcomes. Employees in cabin services, ground operations, engineering, customer support, and management must coordinate under a shared service culture and safety culture. Executive communication helps shape that shared understanding by reinforcing what counts as acceptable behaviour. For example, when leaders consistently emphasize punctuality, safety compliance, customer responsiveness, and professional discipline, these priorities can become normalized across the organisation. When communication instead focuses narrowly on short-term financial performance, employees may perceive a gap between stated values and actual priorities.

The airline setting also makes symbolic communication highly visible. Executive speeches, internal memos, staff forums, and public statements are not neutral; they are interpreted as indicators of leadership seriousness and organisational direction. In a company like Kenya Airways, which must maintain trust among employees, passengers, regulators, and investors, communication can either stabilize the culture or expose weaknesses in it. This is why the study of executive communication is especially relevant in airline service settings where employees work under pressure and public scrutiny.

2.4 Empirical Review

This section examines recent studies that have investigated executive and leadership communication, the communication channels and styles leaders use, and their relationship with employee outcomes. The review focuses on the methodologies adopted, the main findings and the gaps emerging from previous studies. Particular attention is given to studies published

between 2022 and 2025 to establish the current state of knowledge and identify gaps relevant to the present study of executive communication and organisational culture at Kenya Airways PLC.

2.4.1 Communication strategies used by executive leaders and their influence on employee organisational commitment.

Recent empirical studies indicate that the communication strategies adopted by leaders can influence employees' understanding of organisational priorities and their commitment to the organisation. However, the effectiveness of these strategies may depend on the communication channels used, the quality of information provided and the extent to which communication employees to receive clarification and provide feedback. Santos et al. (2023) conducted a systematic literature review to examine the relationship between internal communication and employer branding. The researchers searched the Scopus and Web of Science databases and initially identified 1,896 records. After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the review included nine open-access studies published between 2013 and 2023. The findings indicated that effective internal communication is associated with communication quality, responsiveness, feedback, employee listening and the selection of appropriate communication channels. The review further showed that organisations benefit when communication is continuous and when employees have access to relevant organisational information. However, the study was a review of existing literature rather than primary empirical research, and its focus was employer branding

rather than employee organisational commitment. It also did not examine executive communication within an aviation organisation.

Wahab, Abdullah and Jabeen (2024) examined the impact of leadership communication on employee commitment at Kohat University of Science and Technology in Pakistan. The study adopted a quantitative case study design and collected data from 300 employees selected through simple random sampling using questionnaires. The researchers analysed the data using descriptive statistics, correlation and regression analysis. The findings showed significant positive relationships between leadership communication and employee commitment. Different communication approaches, including face-to-face, email and virtual communication, were positively associated with employee commitment. The study also reported that clarity, transparency, empathy and communication during organisational change were important dimensions of leadership communication, with the overall communication variables explaining a substantial proportion of variation in employee commitment.

The study by Bannor, Deya and Ganu (2024) provides evidence from an African organisational context. The researchers investigated frontline leadership communication and employee commitment in nonprofit organisations in Monrovia, Liberia. Using data from 388 respondents, the study examined perceptions of leadership communication and transparency, levels of employee commitment, the relationship between communication and commitment, and the mediating role of transparency. The study reported a strong positive relationship between leadership communication, transparency and employee commitment, with transparency significantly mediating the relationship. The study therefore demonstrated the importance of

transparent leadership communication in strengthening employee commitment. However, the study was conducted within nonprofit organisations in Liberia and focused on frontline leadership and policy communication rather than executive communication within a large commercial organisation.

Qureshi et al. (2022) examined internal brand management and employee outcomes among 390 non-managerial frontline employees working in three-, four- and five-star hotels in Pakistan. The study used a quantitative survey design and examined the relationships between internal brand management, brand commitment, brand citizenship behaviour and sustainable competitive advantage. The findings showed that internal brand management positively influenced brand commitment and brand citizenship behaviour. The study is relevant because it demonstrates how internal communication and branding practices can influence employees' attachment to organisational objectives. However, the hospitality context differs from aviation, where employees operate across highly diverse occupational groups and where communication has implications for safety, service delivery and operational coordination.

The reviewed studies demonstrate that communication quality, transparency, accessibility and channel selection are associated with employee commitment. However, several gaps remain. First, much of the recent empirical evidence has been generated in universities, nonprofit organisations and hospitality rather than aviation. Second, the studies largely examine leadership or internal communication generally rather than communication specifically originating from executive leaders. Third, limited attention has been given to how executives combine formal face-to-face channels such as town halls and staff meetings with written and digital channels to

communicate organisational priorities to employees. This creates a contextual gap in understanding executive communication and employee organisational commitment within African aviation organisations. The present study addresses this gap by examining the communication strategies used by executive leaders at Kenya Airways PLC and their influence on employee organisational commitment.

2.4.2 Dominant communication styles used by executive leaders and their impact on employee engagement

Recent empirical research suggests that the style adopted by leaders when communicating with employees can shape how employees respond to organisational issues and interact with their leaders. Studies have examined transformational, transactional, participative, supportive and other leadership communication approaches, although findings vary according to organisational and cultural context. Turyahikayo, Mugizi and Kasule (2024) examined the relationship between leadership styles and organisational communication in four public universities in Uganda: Kyambogo University, Gulu University, Busitema University and Mbarara University of Science and Technology. The study employed a correlational research design and collected data from managerial staff using self-administered questionnaires. Descriptive statistics and partial least squares structural equation modelling were used to analyse the data. The findings showed that transformational leadership was highly utilised, while transactional leadership was moderately utilised. Both transformational and transactional leadership styles had positive and significant effects on organisational communication, while passive-avoidant leadership had a positive but statistically insignificant effect. The study demonstrates that different leadership styles can influence the effectiveness of organisational communication. However, the study focused on

public universities and examined organisational communication rather than employee engagement as the principal outcome. Willett et al. (2023) investigated the relationship between leader communication, workplace respect, employee engagement and employee well-being among 1,512 working adults in the United States. The researchers used a quantitative survey to test relationships between leadership communication, workplace respect, occupational resilience, engagement and well-being. The findings were nuanced. Leadership communication was not directly associated with employee engagement and well-being, but it was positively related to respectful engagement and autonomous respect. The study concluded that leadership communication can contribute to a respectful workplace culture, which in turn is associated with employee engagement and well-being. This finding is important because it suggests that communication may influence engagement indirectly through employees' perceptions of how they are treated and valued at work. Nevertheless, the study was conducted in the United States and did not specifically examine executive communication or the communication styles used by leaders in an African organisational setting.

Wulandari and Firdaus (2024) examined the influence of servant leadership, communication and teamwork on employee engagement in an Indonesian organisation. The study used a quantitative survey involving 70 employees and analysed the relationships among the variables using SmartPLS. The findings showed significant positive relationships between communication, teamwork and employee engagement, alongside the effect of servant leadership. The study therefore provides evidence that communication can contribute to employee engagement when considered together with leadership and teamwork. However, its relatively small sample and single-organisational setting limit the extent to which the findings can be generalised. In

addition, the study examined communication as a general organisational variable rather than specifically investigating the dominant communication styles employed by executive leaders.

Yue et al. (2024) examined the impact of supervisory communication on employee adjustment, well-being and relationships with the organisation using a two-wave longitudinal survey of 390 full-time employees in the United States. The study focused on leaders' use of motivating language and examined how communication involving direction, meaning and purpose affected employees over time. The findings indicated that leaders' motivating language, particularly communication that provided guidance and created a sense of purpose, supported newcomers' understanding of their roles and adjustment to the organisation. The longitudinal design is significant because it provides evidence beyond a single point-in-time assessment. However, the study focused on newcomers and supervisory communication rather than the broader workforce and executive communication at organisational level.

The empirical evidence therefore indicates that transformational, supportive, motivating and other constructive communication approaches can contribute to positive employee responses. However, the findings also show that the relationship between communication and engagement is not necessarily direct. Workplace respect, communication climate, leadership behaviour and organisational context may influence the way employees respond to leaders' communication. A methodological gap also exists because many studies use cross-sectional surveys, making it difficult to understand how communication styles operate across different employee groups over time. A contextual gap remains regarding large African organisations, particularly airlines, where executives communicate with employees working in corporate, technical, operational, customer-

facing and other specialised roles. The present study addresses this gap by examining the dominant communication styles employed by executive leaders at Kenya Airways PLC and their impact on employee engagement.

2.4.3 Influence of executive communication strategies on employee trust and loyalty

Recent empirical studies have also examined the relationship between internal or leadership communication, employee trust, organisational relationships and employee loyalty. The findings generally indicate that communication can contribute to trust and loyalty when employees perceive it as reliable, responsive and supportive. However, the empirical evidence remains fragmented across different organisational settings.

Qin and Men (2023) examined the relationship between internal communication, organisational trust and employee outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study used an online survey involving 393 employees from different industries in the United States. It examined corporate symmetrical communication and supportive peer communication and considered employee organisational trust as a mediating variable. The study found that internal communication was relevant to employee outcomes and that organisational trust played a mediating role in the relationship. The study demonstrates the importance of trust as a mechanism through which internal communication can influence employee experiences. However, it was conducted during a specific period of organisational disruption and examined internal communication broadly rather than communication originating specifically from executive leaders.

Nguyen and Ha (2023) investigated the relationships among internal communication, employee engagement, job satisfaction and employee loyalty in higher education institutions in Binh Duong province, Vietnam. The researchers used an online questionnaire and collected data from 255 respondents through convenience and snowball sampling. The study examined the relationships among internal communication, job engagement, organisational engagement, job satisfaction and employee loyalty within a Social Exchange Theory framework. The findings provided empirical evidence of relationships among internal communication and employee outcomes, including employee loyalty. However, the study was undertaken in higher education institutions and relied on non-probability sampling, limiting generalisability to other organisational sectors. It also examined internal communication as a broad construct rather than isolating executive communication strategies.

Sinitsyna, Anand and Stocker (2024) examined the role of internal communication in employee loyalty through a systematic review and synthesis of existing literature. The researchers searched databases including Scopus, Google Scholar and EBSCO and identified employee loyalty as an underdeveloped area within organisational internal communication research. Their review showed that several theoretical perspectives can be used to explain the relationship between internal communication and employee loyalty, including social exchange, social identity, expectancy and sensemaking perspectives. The authors specifically identified the need for further research examining how internal communication contributes to employee loyalty, particularly in the Asia-Pacific context. Although this study provides a useful synthesis of existing evidence, it does not provide primary empirical data and does not examine executive communication within an African organisation.

Yue et al. (2024) further demonstrated the relationship between leader communication and employees' relationships with their organisation through a two-wave longitudinal study of 390 employees. The study found that motivating language used by leaders, particularly communication that provided direction and created a sense of purpose, supported employee adjustment and organisational relationships over time. The study is relevant to employee trust and loyalty because it demonstrates that the way leaders communicate can influence employees' relationship with the organisation beyond the immediate transmission of information. However, the focus on organisational newcomers limits its applicability to employees with longer organisational tenure and does not directly examine employee loyalty as an outcome.

Overall, the studies show that communication is associated with employee trust, organisational relationships and loyalty. However, important gaps remain. Existing studies frequently examine internal communication as a broad organisational process rather than isolating communication from executive leaders. There is also limited empirical evidence on the combined relationship between executive communication, employee trust and employee loyalty within large African organisations. Furthermore, much of the evidence is based on cross-sectional designs, limiting understanding of how trust and loyalty develop through repeated leadership communication. The present study addresses these gaps by examining how executive communication strategies at Kenya Airways PLC influence employee trust and loyalty within an organisational context characterised by diverse employee groups and complex operational demands.

2.4.4 Contribution of executive communication to the reinforcement and sustainability of organisational culture.

Recent empirical research indicates that leadership communication can influence organisational culture by shaping employee perceptions of organisational values, expected behaviours, relationships and shared meanings. However, empirical studies differ in the extent to which they directly connect executive communication with the reinforcement and sustainability of organisational culture. Willett et al. (2023) examined how leader communication contributes to workplace culture and employee outcomes using a quantitative survey of 1,512 working adults in the United States. The study found that leadership communication was positively related to respectful engagement and autonomous respect. The researchers further found that workplace respect was associated with employee engagement and well-being. These findings suggest that leadership communication can contribute to the development of a workplace culture in which employees feel respected and recognised. However, the study did not directly examine organisational culture as a multidimensional construct or investigate how executive communication reinforces specific organisational values over time.

Yue (2024) examined the effects of supervisor verbal aggressiveness on workplace emotional culture, employee-organisation relationships and counterproductive work behaviours. The study used a quantitative design involving 392 full-time employees from different organisations and industries in the United States and analysed the data using structural equation modelling. The findings showed that supervisor verbal aggressiveness was positively associated with negative emotional culture and counterproductive work behaviour. The effect on counterproductive behaviour was mediated by negative team-level emotional culture. The study demonstrates that

leadership communication can shape the emotional dimension of workplace culture and employee behaviour. However, the study concentrated on negative communication behaviour at supervisory level and did not examine how executive communication positively reinforces organisational values and sustainable culture.

Wahyu and Salendu (2024) examined the relationship between leaders' motivating language and employee voice behaviour, considering positive emotional culture as a mediator and procedural justice climate as a moderator. The study was conducted in Indonesia and focused on the way leader communication influences employees' willingness to express ideas and concerns. The study is relevant because employee voice is an important element in an organisational culture characterised by openness and participation. Its focus on positive emotional culture also extends research beyond the negative aspects of organisational culture. However, the study concentrated on employee voice and emotional culture rather than the broader sustainability of organisational culture, and it did not examine executive communication within a large, operationally complex organisation.

Mpuya (2024) examined leadership communication and organisational performance in a multinational business development organisation in East Africa. The study adopted a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative survey data with qualitative evidence. The findings showed strong agreement among respondents that effective leadership communication helps articulate organisational vision and goals and builds support for strategic initiatives. Both the quantitative and qualitative findings indicated that leadership communication contributes to a collaborative organisational culture. The study is particularly relevant because it provides

evidence from an East African organisational context and uses both quantitative and qualitative methods. However, its focus was on organisational performance and a multinational business development organisation rather than the reinforcement and sustainability of organisational culture in an airline.

The empirical evidence therefore demonstrates that leadership communication can influence workplace culture through respect, emotional climate, employee voice, shared organisational direction and behavioural expectations. Nevertheless, significant gaps remain. First, many studies focus on specific dimensions of culture, such as emotional culture, respect or employee voice, rather than examining organisational culture more broadly. Second, most studies examine supervisors or leaders generally rather than executive leaders whose communication carries organisation-wide strategic significance. Third, limited research has examined how executive communication reinforces culture over time through repeated communication of organisational values, safety expectations, customer service standards, accountability and shared organisational purpose. Finally, there is limited evidence from African aviation organisations.

The present study addresses these gaps by examining how executive communication contributes to the reinforcement and sustainability of organisational culture at Kenya Airways PLC. The study considers executive communication not simply as a mechanism for transmitting information but as an organisational process through which leaders communicate values, expectations, priorities and behavioural standards that may shape and sustain organisational culture.

2.4.5 Summary of empirical gaps

The reviewed empirical studies establish that leadership and internal communication are associated with important employee outcomes, including organisational commitment, employee engagement, trust, loyalty and aspects of organisational culture. However, the literature reveals four major gaps relevant to the present study.

First, there is a contextual gap. Recent studies have been conducted predominantly in universities, nonprofit organisations, hotels, government and other business settings in Asia, Europe and North America, with relatively limited empirical evidence from African aviation organisations. The few African studies identified provide useful evidence from Liberia, Uganda, Tansania and other contexts but do not address executive communication within a major African airline.

Second, there is a conceptual gap. Existing studies frequently examine general internal communication or leadership communication, whereas limited attention has been given specifically to executive communication as a distinct organisational process. The present study focuses on communication originating from executive leaders and examines its relationship with several employee and organisational outcomes.

Third, there is a methodological gap. Many recent studies rely predominantly on quantitative cross-sectional surveys. Although such studies establish relationships among variables, they provide limited qualitative understanding of how employees interpret executive communication and how communication practices are experienced across different employee groups. A mixed-methods approach therefore provides an opportunity to combine measurable relationships with employees' and executives' explanations and experiences.

Fourth, there is an integrative gap. Previous studies have often examined individual outcomes separately, such as commitment, engagement, trust, loyalty or selected aspects of culture. Limited empirical research has examined these outcomes together within one organisational context. The present study addresses this gap by examining executive communication through four related dimensions: communication strategies and organisational commitment; communication styles and employee engagement; executive communication and employee trust and loyalty; and executive communication and the reinforcement and sustainability of organisational culture at Kenya Airways PLC.

2.5 Research Gap Analysis

The reviewed literature establishes leadership communication as a pivotal driver of employee outcomes in service-oriented organisations such as Kenya Airways (KQ), influencing engagement, brand trust, and loyalty (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Qureshi et al., 2022; Salanova et al., 2005). Dominant styles — transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire — shape interactions through vigour, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Bass & Avolio, 1994). Evidence consistently affirms the superiority of transformational rhetoric, with Salanova et al. (2005) reporting a 12% engagement gain over 12 months, mediated by task meaningfulness and cascading into improved service delivery and complaint handling (Men, 2014).

For brand trust, transparent and consistent two-way strategies foster multidimensional confidence — cognitive reliability, affective security, and behavioural endorsement — rooted in social exchange and signalling theories (Walter & Kiefer, 2025; Muhammad et al., n.d.). Empirical links show strong correlations with procedural justice and commitment (Qureshi et al., 2022; Kofuku, 2024). Loyalty extends this dynamic, with relational communication patterns

mediating identification and advocacy, evidenced by notable engagement uplifts and productivity gains (Heleta Švrakić, 2023). Collectively, studies affirm transformational communication as superior for intrinsic motivation, internal alignment, and resilience during crises (Haiilo, 2023; Leadership Success, 2025).

Despite robust findings, several gaps limit applicability to African aviation contexts such as KQ:

Contextual Specificity**:** Most evidence derives from Western or Asian samples (e.g., Salanova et al., 2005 in Spain; Qureshi et al., 2022 in Pakistan), overlooking high-context African cultures characterised by collectivism and power distance (Walter, 2024). No studies examine Kenyan service sectors amid economic volatility, digital transformation, or post-COVID recovery.

Design Limitations**:** Cross-sectional designs dominate, limiting causal inference. Few studies employ longitudinal or experimental approaches to test whether transformational styles sustain trust and loyalty beyond 12 months (Muhammad et al., n.d.).

Digital and Multichannel Integration**:** Existing work emphasises face-to-face channels, neglecting hybrid and digital tools (e.g., CEO social media, AI chatbots). Multichannel effects — such as email versus video on trust — remain underexplored, particularly in contexts with connectivity challenges like Nairobi (Itam et al., 2020; Haiilo, 2023).

Sectoral and Hierarchical Scope**:** Research often focuses on frontline staff, neglecting the role of mid-level supervisors in cascading executive messages. Aviation-specific dynamics, such as safety complaints and high-stakes interactions, are rarely linked to communication styles (Hackman & Johnson, 2013).

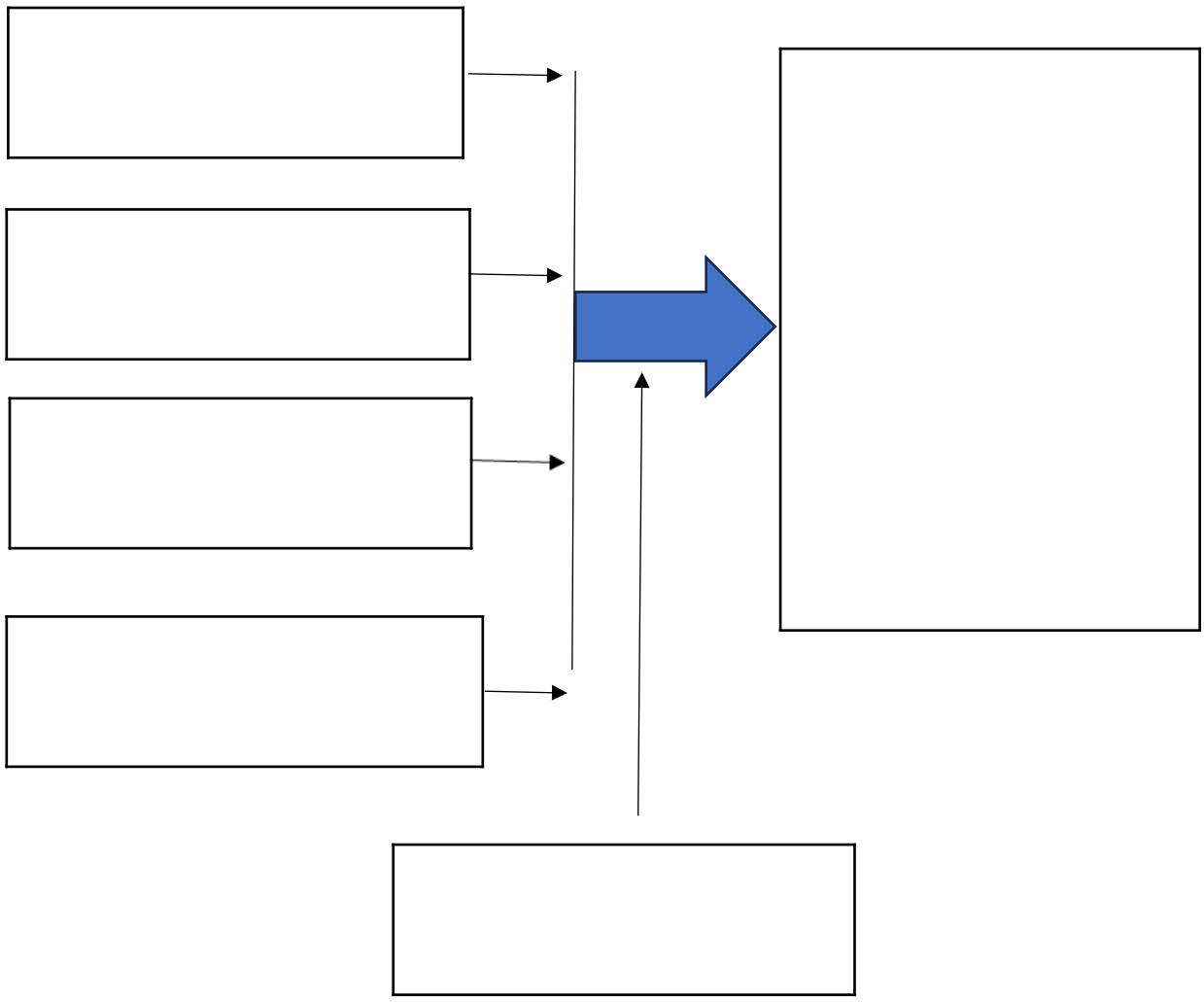
Methodological Imbalance**:** Quantitative approaches (SEM, correlations) dominate, with limited qualitative insights into lived experiences. Few studies adopt mixed-methods designs that capture both causality and depth (Kofuku, 2024).

This study addresses these voids through a targeted investigation at Kenya Airways. By employing a mixed-methods design — combining employee surveys with executive interviews — it captures African cultural nuances such as collectivism and power distance, while extending Western models to emerging markets. It also integrates digital and multichannel communication practices, situates findings within the aviation sector's unique challenges, and provides both theoretical and practical contributions to leadership communication scholarship.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

I.V **D.V**

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATION **ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE**



Moderating variable

The conceptual framework illustrates the hypothesised relationships between the study's independent variable (I.V.)—Executive Communication—and dependent variable (D.V.)—Organisational Culture—at Kenya Airways. Executive Communication shapes Organisational Culture through Employee Engagement as the intervening variable, while Leadership Style (transformational vs transactional) moderates this relationship by strengthening or weakening it.

By integrating Media Richness Theory (channel selection drives engagement) and Transformational Leadership Theory (leadership style amplifies cultural alignment), the model posits that transformational leadership enhances the impact of executive communication on engagement and cultural sustainability, whereas transactional styles may constrain these effects. This framework captures the critical dynamics of executive communication within Kenya Airways' aviation service environment, linking leadership behaviour, communication practices, and cultural outcomes in a coherent analytical structure.

2.7 Summary of chapter

Chapter Two presented the literature review and theoretical framework that underpinned the study on the influence of executive communication on organisational culture at Kenya Airways. The chapter began by conceptualising executive communication and organisational culture, drawing on key definitions and models from organisational behaviour and corporate communication scholarship. It highlighted how executive communication functions not only as a management tool but also as a cultural force that shapes shared values, norms, assumptions, and everyday practices within an organisation.

The review examined empirical studies on the relationship between leadership communication and organisational culture in various sectors, with particular attention to high-reliability

industries such as aviation. It showed that transparent, consistent, and credible communication from senior leaders was associated with stronger cultural alignment, higher employee trust, and greater organisational commitment. Conversely, inconsistent or contradictory messaging was linked to cynicism, disengagement, and cultural fragmentation. The chapter also explored how communication channels, styles, and strategies influence employee engagement, trust, loyalty, and commitment.

The study drew theoretical guidance from two main frameworks. Transformational Leadership Theory explained how inspirational, empathetic, and vision-oriented communication from executives can motivate employees, build trust, and foster a shared sense of purpose. Schein's Model of Organisational Culture provided a lens for understanding how leadership messages become embedded in cultural artefacts, espoused values, and basic assumptions over time. Together, these theories framed the link between executive communication practices and the development, reinforcement, and transformation of organisational culture.

The chapter further reviewed literature on communication channels (such as town halls, digital platforms, memos, and briefings), communication styles (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire), and communication strategies (transparency, feedback mechanisms, crisis communication, and two-way engagement). It highlighted gaps in existing research, particularly the limited focus on executive communication mechanisms in African airlines and the need for more context-specific evidence on how leadership messaging influences cultural outcomes in volatile, competitive environments.

Finally, the chapter presented a conceptual framework that linked executive communication (independent variable) to organisational culture (dependent variable), with employee commitment, engagement, trust, and loyalty as intervening outcomes. This framework guided the

design of the study instruments and the analysis of findings in subsequent chapters. Overall, Chapter Two established the theoretical and empirical basis for understanding how executive communication shapes organisational culture at Kenya Airways.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology used to examine the influence of executive communication on organisational culture at Kenya Airways. It describes the research design, philosophical underpinning, target population, sampling procedures, data collection instruments and procedures, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations. The chapter concludes by summarising the methodological approach adopted for the study.

3.2 Research Design

The study used a mixed-methods research design. This involved blending quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews. This approach was appropriate because it allowed for a holistic exploration of how executive communication shaped organisational culture at Kenya Airways, enabling triangulation of data for richer insights (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). This design facilitated triangulation—cross-verifying findings from multiple sources to enhance validity, reduce bias, and provide a comprehensive understanding of communication-culture dynamics in

organisational settings. It was particularly suited to pragmatic research questions in business contexts, where quantitative generalisability complements qualitative nuance, as evidenced in prior organisational studies (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

Kenya Airways was the bounded unit of analysis in this research. This facilitated an in-depth examination of contextual factors such as aviation industry pressures and national cultural influences on communication practices. Looking at a single case was ideal for exploring contemporary phenomena in their real-life context, particularly "how" and "why" questions about complex organisational dynamics, where the researcher's control over events is limited (Yin, 2014). For Kenya Airways, this allowed a holistic investigation of executive communication's role in shaping culture amid unique constraints. The methodology supported mixed methods integration (surveys and interviews), enabling thick description and theory-building from embedded data (Stake, 1995).

3.3 Philosophical Underpinning

The study adopted a pragmatic philosophical paradigm, prioritizing practical solutions over rigid paradigms. Pragmatism justifies the mixed-methods integration by focusing on what works best to answer the research questions, accommodating both objective measurements of employee perceptions and subjective interpretations of leadership messaging. Pragmatism views knowledge as tentative and instrumental, emphasizing the utility of methods in real-world problem-solving rather than ontological purity. Pragmatism flexibly combines both to address complex, multifaceted phenomena effectively (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). This paradigm aligns with organisational research on communication and culture at Kenya Airways, where quantitative data quantifies patterns while qualitative insights reveal contextual nuances,

enabling triangulation for actionable recommendations (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

3.4 Population

The target population of the study comprised employees of Kenya Airways PLC based in Nairobi, including top executives, middle-level managers, and frontline employees. The study population is estimated at 1,627 staff members drawn from the selected departments within the organisation.

3.5 Target Population

The target population for this study consisted of 1,627 employees working in the selected departments at Kenya Airways headquarters in Nairobi. This population included one Chief Executive Officer, 15 directors, and 1,611 employees. The study focused on individuals who were directly involved in or exposed to executive communication within the organisation.

Table 3.1: A table showing the projected study population

SECTION	**POPULATION**
CEO	1
Directors	15
Employees	1611

TOTAL	**1627**

Constructed by the researcher (2026).

3.5 Sample and sampling techniques

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, meaning that both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. For the quantitative component, the study used probability sampling for employees to obtain a representative sample. For the qualitative component, the study used purposive sampling to select key informants such as the CEO and directors because they have direct knowledge of executive communication and organisational culture (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Saunders et al., 2019).

3.5.1 Sample size

The Yamane formula was used to determine the sample size from the population of 1627. This is because the Yamane formula provides a simplified method for calculating sample size from a finite population. It assumes maximum variability and a specified margin of error, making it practical for surveys without needing prior proportion estimates. The formula, introduced by Taro Yamane, is n=N1+N(e)2n=1+N(e)2N, where n is the sample size, N is the population size, and e is the margin of error (e.g., 0.01) (Yamane, 1967).

Calculation for N=1627, e=0.10

- e2= (0.10)2=0.01e2= (0.10)2=0.01
- N×0.01=1627×0.01=16.27N×0.01=1627×0.01=16.27

- Denominator: 1+16.27=17.271+16.27=17.27

- n=162717.27≈94.21n=17.271627≈94.21 (round up to 95)

n=1+N(e)2N=1+1627(0.10)21627=95

Therefore, the sample size for employees was determined to be 95, and it comprised 11 executives and 84 employees. The quantitative sample size was therefore 95 respondents. Since the study also included qualitative interviews, the CEO and directors were included as key informants. Thus, the overall study involved 85 questionnaire respondents and 10 interview participants, giving a total of 95 participants (Yamane, 1967; Saunders et al., 2019).

3.5.2 Sampling Techniques

For the quantitative part of the study, stratified random sampling was used to ensure that employees from different departments were fairly represented. The population was first divided into relevant strata such as operations, human resources, customer service, and other selected departments. After stratification, simple random sampling was used to select the employee respondents from each stratum (Etikan et al., 2016; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

For the qualitative part of the study, purposive sampling was used. This method was used to select the directors because they are key decision-makers and are most likely to provide rich information on executive communication and organisational culture. Purposive sampling was appropriate for qualitative inquiry because it focuses on information-rich participants rather than statistical representation (Palinkas et al., 2015; Saunders et al., 2019).

Table 3.2 shows a summary of sampling methods and sample size

Study population units	Sampling method	Sample size
CEO	Purposive	1
Directors	Stratified purposive	10
Employees	Stratified, Simple random sampling	84
TOTAL		95

Constructed by the researcher (2026).

3.6 Data collection instruments

This study used both quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments. Quantitative data was collected from employees using structured questionnaires. These questionnaires contained closed-ended questions designed to generate measurable responses on executive communication and organisational culture (Saunders et al., 2019).

Qualitative data were collected from the directors using semi-structured interview guides. The interviews allowed the researcher to explore leadership communication practices in greater depth and to capture explanations, experiences, and interpretations that may not emerge from questionnaires. The questionnaires therefore served the quantitative component, while the interview guide served the qualitative component (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

3.6 Data Collection Instruments

The study used two main data collection instruments: structured questionnaires and semi-structured interview guides. The questionnaires were administered to employees, while the interview guide was used with the CEO and directors. This combination was appropriate because the questionnaires generated measurable responses from a larger group, while the interviews provided deeper insight from key informants with direct knowledge of executive communication practices.

The structured questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data from employees on all four research objectives. It measured the communication strategies used by executive leaders, the dominant communication styles experienced by employees, employee trust and loyalty, and the extent to which executive communication reinforced organisational culture.

The questionnaire aligned with the first objective by capturing employee perceptions of the communication strategies used by executive leaders, such as feedback mechanisms, formal announcements, digital updates, and consultation practices, and how these affect organisational commitment. It aligned with the second objective by measuring employees' views on leadership communication styles, including whether communication is directive, participatory, inspirational, or controlling, and how these styles influence engagement. It aligned with the third objective by assessing levels of trust and loyalty through items on honesty, reliability, fairness, and willingness to remain committed to the organisation. It aligned with the fourth objective by measuring perceptions of how leadership communication supports shared values, norms, and the continuity of organisational culture.

The semi-structured interview guide was used to collect qualitative data from the directors. It focused on executive perspectives concerning communication strategies, communication styles,

employee reactions, trust-building, and cultural reinforcement. The interview guide allowed the researcher to explore how senior leaders design and deliver communication, why they choose certain styles or channels, and how they believe their communication influences commitment, engagement, trust, loyalty, and culture. This tool was particularly useful because it allowed flexibility to probe for clarification and depth while staying aligned with the study objectives.

Together, the two instruments provided complementary data. The questionnaires offered breadth by capturing the views of a larger number of employees, while the interview guide provided depth through the experiences and explanations of top leaders. This ensured that each research objective was addressed from both the employee and leadership perspectives, making the findings more comprehensive and credible.

3.7 Reliability

Reliability applies mainly to the quantitative instrument, which in this study is the structured questionnaire. A pilot test was conducted with five employees who were not included in the final sample. The pilot study helped determine whether the questions were clear, consistent, and easy to understand. (Hair et al., 2019; Taherdoost, 2016).

For the qualitative interviews, reliability was supported by consistency in how interviews were conducted, recorded, transcribed, and coded. This was enhanced by using the same interview guide for all key informants and maintaining a clear audit trail during analysis (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

3.8 Validity

Validity was considered mainly in relation to the quantitative questionnaire. Content validity was ensured through expert review by the supervisor and by comparing the instruments with established literature on executive communication and organisational culture. The questionnaire items were reviewed to ensure that they accurately measured the variables under investigation (Taherdoost, 2016; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

For the qualitative component, credibility was strengthened through careful transcription, member checking where necessary, and thick description. Triangulation between questionnaire and interview findings improved the overall trustworthiness of the study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

3.9 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted in three sequential phases. First, the researcher obtained formal access to Kenya Airways through the NACOSTI research permit and institutional clearance. Second, the pilot study was carried out with five employees to refine the questionnaire and interview guide, after which the final instruments were administered. The structured questionnaires were distributed electronically to employees across selected departments, with clear instructions and assurances of confidentiality. Response rates were monitored, and follow-up reminders were sent where necessary. Third, semi-structured interviews with executives were scheduled at their convenience, conducted in person or via secure video conferencing, and audio-recorded with consent. The recordings were transcribed verbatim, and key themes were coded and analysed in alignment with the study objectives. Throughout the

process, ethical guidelines were observed, including informed consent, anonymity, and voluntary participation.

3.10 Data analysis plan

The quantitative data from the questionnaires were analysed using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were used to summarize the responses. The quantitative analysis was carried out using statistical software SPSS and Excel (Hair et al., 2019; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

The qualitative data from the interviews were analysed thematically. The interview transcripts were read carefully, coded, and grouped into themes that corresponded to the study objectives. This helped explain how executives understood communication and how they believed it shaped organisational culture at Kenya Airways (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

Since this was a mixed-methods study, the final interpretation combines both sets of findings. The quantitative results show patterns and relationships, while the qualitative findings provide explanation and context. Integrating the two gives a fuller understanding of the influence of executive communication on organisational culture (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

3.11 Ethical considerations

The study observed the ethical principles of informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and protection from harm. Before data collection began, the researcher obtained a clearance letter from the University confirming that the proposal had been

successfully presented and approved. The proposal was then submitted for ethical review to the SPU ISERC, after which the researcher applied for a research permit from NACOSTI.

Before participating in the study, all respondents were informed about the purpose of the research, the nature of their involvement, and how the information would be used. They were required to give informed consent before completing the questionnaire or taking part in the interview. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were free to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative consequences. This was important because it respects the rights and autonomy of the participants.

The researcher also ensured that no participant was exposed to physical, emotional, or professional harm as a result of taking part in the study. Questions were framed in a respectful manner, and the interviews were conducted at times convenient to the respondents. Where necessary, the researcher avoided asking sensitive questions that would cause discomfort or interfere with workplace relations. This helped minimize any risk of harm during the research process.

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study. The identities of respondents were not disclosed in the report, and the findings were presented in a way that did not attribute responses to specific individuals. Data collected from questionnaires and interviews were used strictly for academic purposes only. Access to the data will be limited to the researcher and any authorized academic supervisor or examiner involved in the study.

The researcher will also ensure secure storage of the collected data. Both hard copy and electronic records have been kept safely to prevent loss, unauthorized access, or misuse. Any

digital files will be password-protected, while printed documents will be stored in a secure location. After the study is completed, the data will be retained or disposed of in line with institutional ethical requirements.

3.12 Chapter Summary

Chapter three outlined the research methodology used to examine the influence of executive communication on organisational culture at Kenya Airways. The chapter described the research design, target population, sampling procedures, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations that guided the study.

The study adopted a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between executive communication and organisational culture. This design allowed for the measurement of patterns and relationships through survey data, while also capturing deeper insights and experiences through interviews. The target population comprised 95 respondents drawn from Kenya Airways' top executives, middle managers, and employees across various departments. Stratified, simple random, and purposive sampling techniques were applied to ensure representation across different organisational levels and functional areas.

Data were collected using two main instruments: structured questionnaires and semi-structured interview guides. The questionnaires gathered quantitative data on respondents' perceptions of executive communication channels, styles, and strategies, as well as their effects on employee commitment, engagement, trust, loyalty, and organisational culture. The interviews provided

qualitative data that enriched the understanding of how leadership communication was experienced, interpreted, and acted upon by employees in their daily work.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, as well as regression analysis to test the relationship between executive communication and organisational culture. Qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis, where interview transcripts were coded and grouped into themes that reflected key patterns and insights related to the research objectives.

The chapter also addressed ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the secure handling of data. It highlighted measures taken to minimize bias and protect respondents, particularly given the sensitive nature of questions about leadership and organisational challenges. Chapter Three provided a clear and systematic account of how the study was conducted, ensuring that the methods used were appropriate, rigorous, and aligned with the research objectives.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and analysis of the data collected on the influence of executive communication in shaping organisational culture: a case of Kenya Airways. The study had the following objectives (i) To examine the communication strategies used by executive leaders at Kenya Airways PLC and their influence on employee organisational commitment (ii) To analyze

the dominant communication styles employed by executive leaders at Kenya Airways PLC and their impact on employee engagement, (iii)To assess the influence of executive communication strategies on employee trust and loyalty within the organisation and (iv) To evaluate how executive communication contributes to the reinforcement and sustainability of organisational culture at Kenya Airways PLC. This chapter therefore presents the data collected in a bid to provide the findings on the research objectives. The chapter will demonstrate the response rate that was achieved, the demographic details of the respondents, quantitative findings and the discussions drawn from the research data. This information will be presented in the form of tables, charts, figures and notes.

4.2 Response Rate

The response rate of a research study is a key measure of its success. It reflects the number of individuals who responded to the survey, out of the total number of individuals who were invited to participate. A good response rate is typically considered to be between 50% and 75%. According to Baruch and Holton (2008), “the level of response rate (RR) is an important, sometimes crucial, factor in assessing the value of research findings” (Baruch & Holton, 2008, p. 1140). The response rate is the percentage of the number of questionnaires filled and returned over the total questionnaires distributed. This percentage is computed to determine whether the response is sufficient for further studies. In this study, 85 questionnaires were distributed by the researcher, and 85 of them were returned duly filled by the respondents. This represents 100% of the respondents, which is a valid rate. The researcher also interviewed 4 directors out of the projected 10.

Table 4.1 shows the response rate for this research.

Table 4.1: Response rate

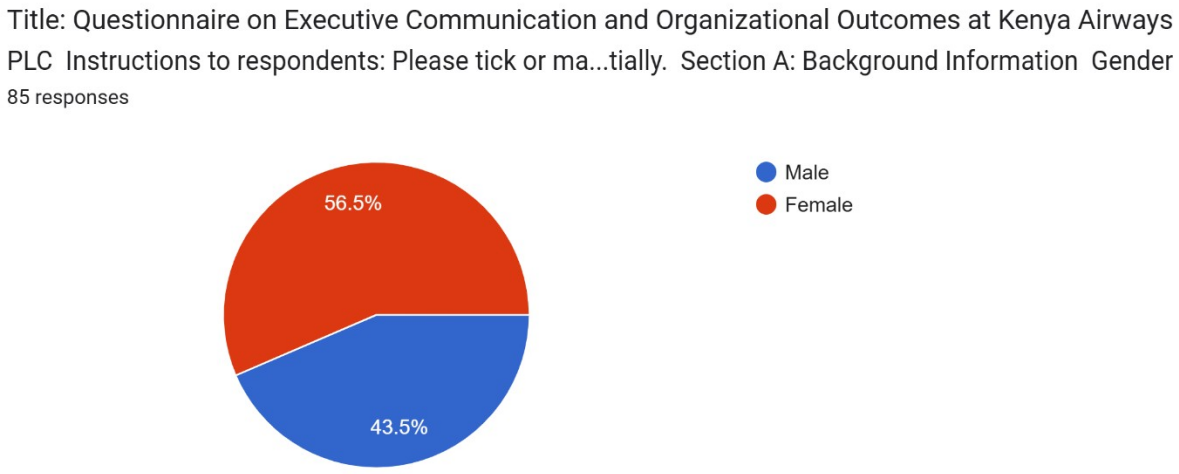
Study population units	Sample size targeted	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Directors	10	4	11
Employees	85	85	89
TOTAL	95	89	100

Source: Research data (2026)

The frequencies in the above table were based on the number sourced from the study population and the responses received from each category of the targeted respondents. This is the response rate upon which the discussions of the study findings will be based.

4.3 Analysis of Demographic Information

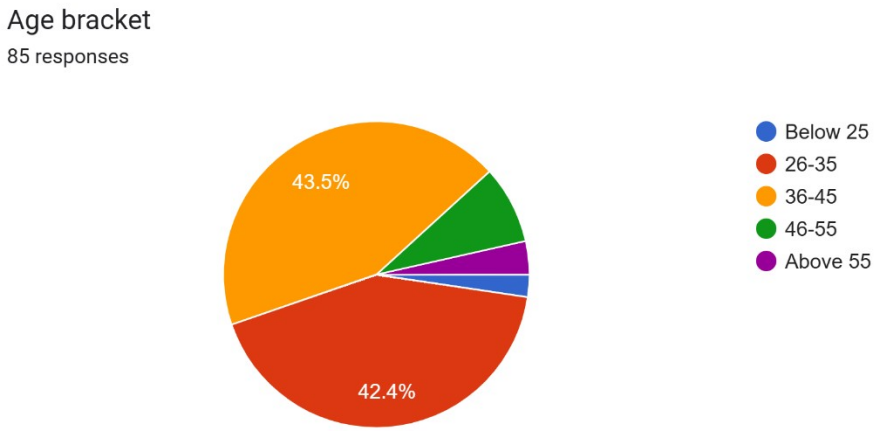
4.3.1 Gender of the respondents



The researcher sought to find out the gender of the respondents. The survey findings show that female respondents constituted 56.6% of the sample, while male respondents accounted for

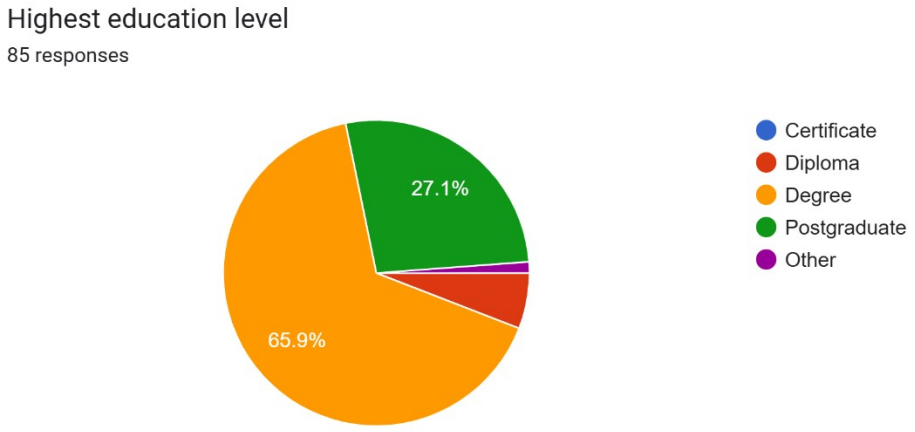
43.5%. This indicates a near-balanced distribution with a slight predominance of female participants.

4.3.2 AGE



The age distribution suggests that the sample is concentrated in the 26–45 age range, which makes up 86.0% of respondents, with the largest shares in 36–45 (43.5%) and 26–35 (42.5%). Younger respondents below 25 and older respondents above 55 are minimally represented at 2.4% and 3.5%, respectively. This pattern shows a strong mid-age dominance in the sample, especially among respondents aged 26–45. That means the findings are likely to reflect the views and experiences of middle-aged participants more than those of younger or older groups.

4.3.3 EDUCATION LEVEL



The respondents were predominantly degree holders (65.9%), followed by postgraduate participants (27.1%). Diploma holders constituted 5.9%, while other qualifications accounted for 1.2%, and no respondents reported certificate-level education. This shows a highly educated sample, with 93.0% of respondents holding at least a degree.

4.3.4 DEPARTMENT

The following is the Summary of the respondents' departments

Table 4.2 Table on departments of employees

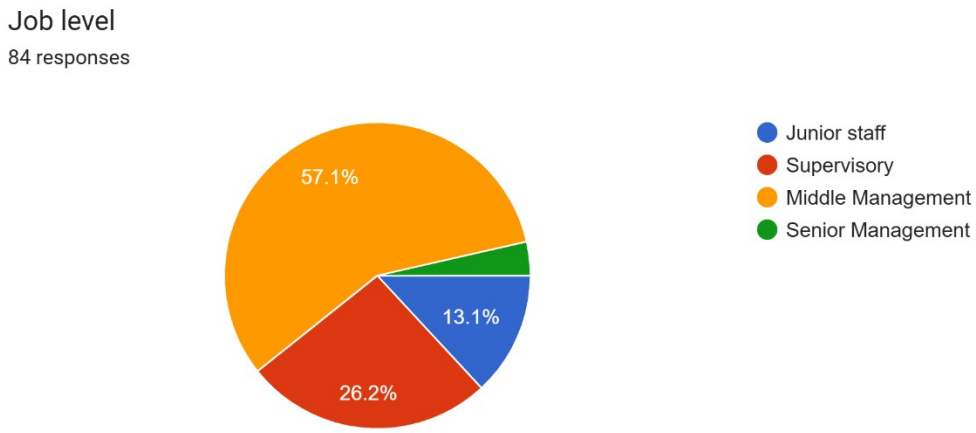
Grouped category	**Examples included**	**Approx. frequency**
Technology and digital	Technology, Technology Dept., Platforms & Database, Platforms and Infra, Cybersecurity, DevSecOps, Security Operations, Technology Service Delivery, Solutions Delivery	11
Customer-facing	Customer Experience, Customer Excellence, Customer	9

services	Relations, Customer Care, Customer Excellence Centre, Customer Relations Feedback	
Operations and ground services	Ground Service, Ground services, Ground Operations, Passenger Services, Baggage, Inflight Operations, Cargo services, Maintenance, Maintenance & Repair	10
Finance and corporate support	Finance, Accountant, Legal, Corporate, Supply Chain, Merchandising, Marketing Brand, Research	8
Aviation and specialist units	Fahari Aviation, Charters Manager, Loyalty, Content Development, Optimisation & Strategy	5
Other distinct entries	Commercial, Innovation, Safety, Service Delivery, Devsecops Security, Brands Management, and single unique labels	14

Respondents came from a broad range of departments, with notable representation from Technology, Customer Experience, Ground Operations, Finance, and Solutions/Service Delivery. The sample also included participants from specialized units such as Cybersecurity, DevSecOps, Legal, Research, and Aviation-related functions. Overall, the department profile indicates a diverse but uneven distribution of respondents across the organisation. Technology-related units were strongly represented, including Technology, Technology Department, Technology Service Delivery, Platforms & Database, Platforms and Infra, Cybersecurity, DevSecOps, and Security Operations. Customer-facing functions were also prominent, including Customer Experience, Customer Excellence Centre, Customer Relations, Customer Care, and Customer Excellence.

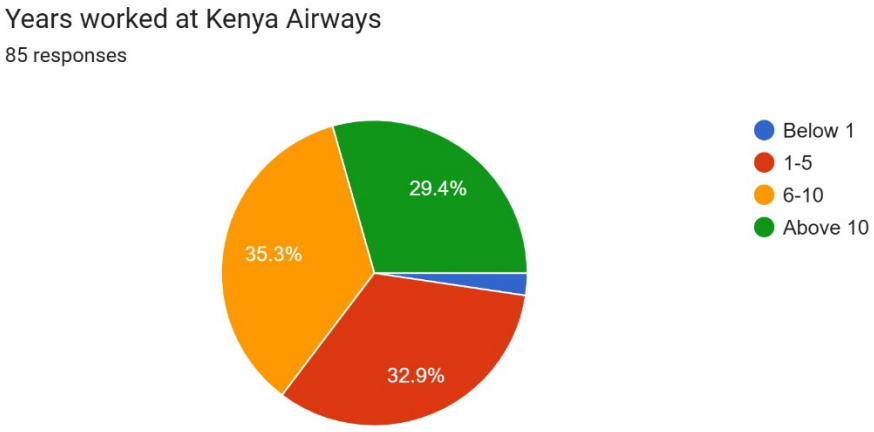
Operational areas were well covered, including Ground Service, Ground Operations, Passenger Services, Baggage, Inflight Operations, Cargo Services, and Maintenance. Corporate support and specialist functions were present in smaller numbers, such as Finance, Legal, Research, Marketing Brand, Supply Chain, Merchandising, and Accounting.

4.4.4 JOB LEVEL



The respondents were predominantly from middle management (57.1%), followed by supervisory staff (26.2%) and junior staff (13.1%). Senior management accounted for only 3.6% of the sample, indicating limited representation from top leadership.

4.4.5 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE AT KENYA AIRWAYS



The researcher wanted to find out the years worked at Kenya Airways. The respondents were mainly concentrated in the 6–10-year (35.3%) and 1–5-year (32.9%) experience categories, while 29.4% had more than 10 years of experience. Only 2.4% of respondents had less than one year of experience, indicating that the sample was largely composed of experienced staff. This suggests a fairly experienced sample, with most respondents having at least one year of experience and many falling in the mid-experience range. The presence of nearly one-third with more than 10 years, also indicates that the survey includes a substantial group of seasoned staff.

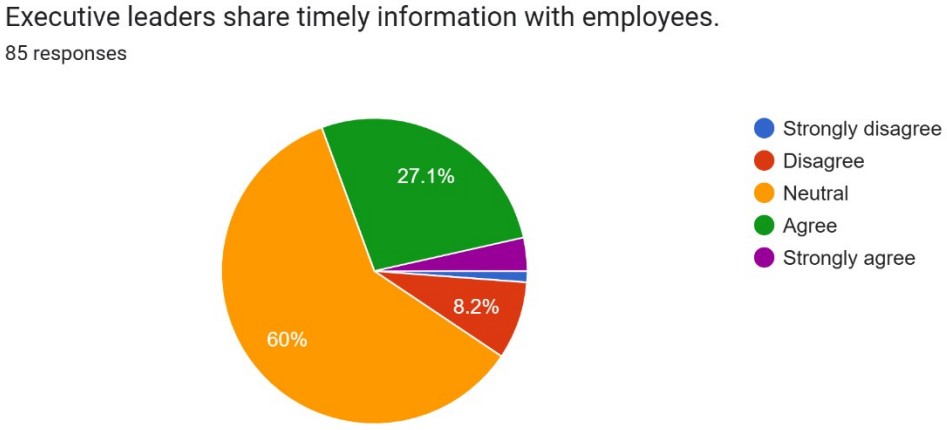
4.5 COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES USED BY EXECUTIVE LEADERS AT KENYA AIRWAYS PLC AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON EMPLOYEE ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

4.5.1 Executive Communication Strategies



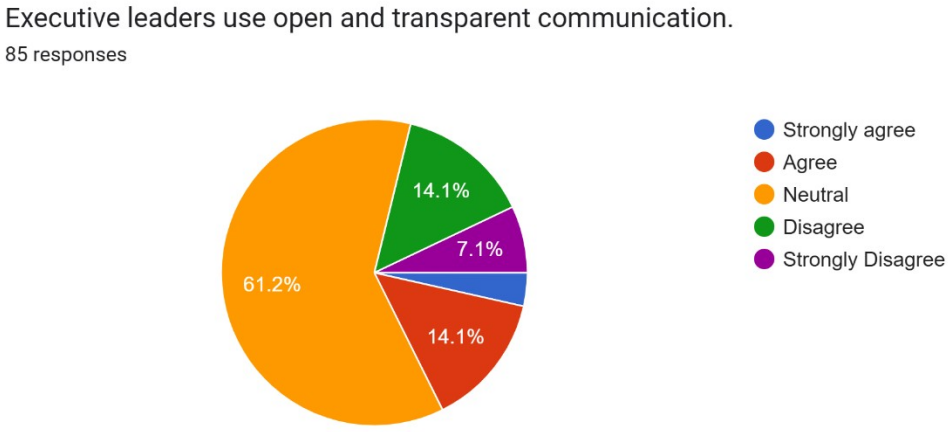
The researcher wanted to find out the executive communication strategies. Most respondents were neutral on whether executive leaders communicate organisational goals clearly, accounting for 68.3% of responses. A smaller proportion agreed or strongly agreed, while 11.0% disagreed or strongly disagreed. The mean score of 2.55 indicates a weak-to-moderate perception of clarity in the executive communication of organisational goals.

4.5.2 TIMELY SHARING OF INFORMATION WITH EMPLOYEES



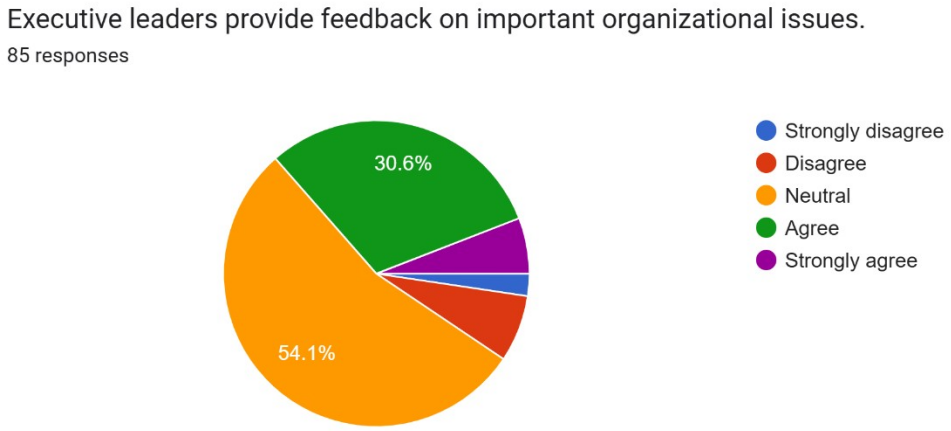
The researcher sought to find out if the executive leaders shared timely information with employees. Most respondents were neutral regarding the statement. Neutral responses accounted for 60.0% of the sample, while 30.6% agreed or strongly agreed and 9.4% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Overall, the results indicate a moderate but mostly undecided perception of the statement.

4.5.3 EXECUTIVE LEADERS' USE OF OPEN AND TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATION



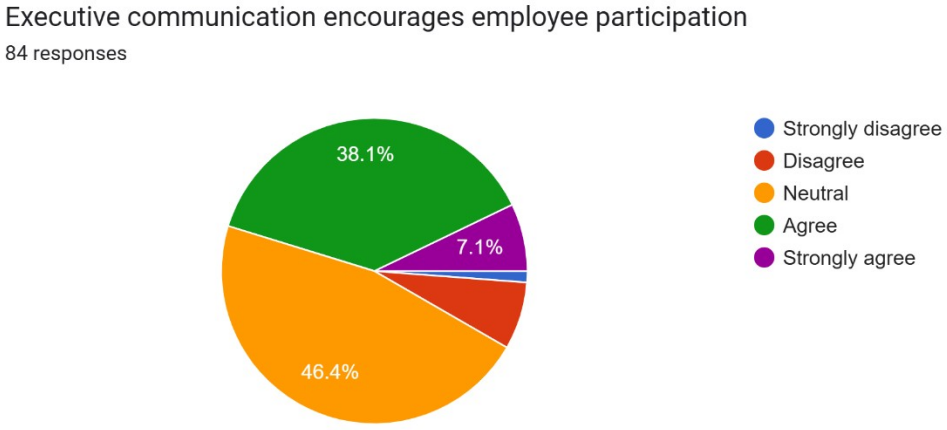
The researcher wanted to find out whether executive leaders use open and transparent communication. Most respondents were neutral, accounting for 61.2% of the sample. A total of 17.7% agreed or strongly agreed, while 21.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This suggests that the statement is viewed with uncertainty overall, with limited positive endorsement.

4.5.4 PROVISION OF FEEDBACK ON ORGANISATIONAL ISSUES



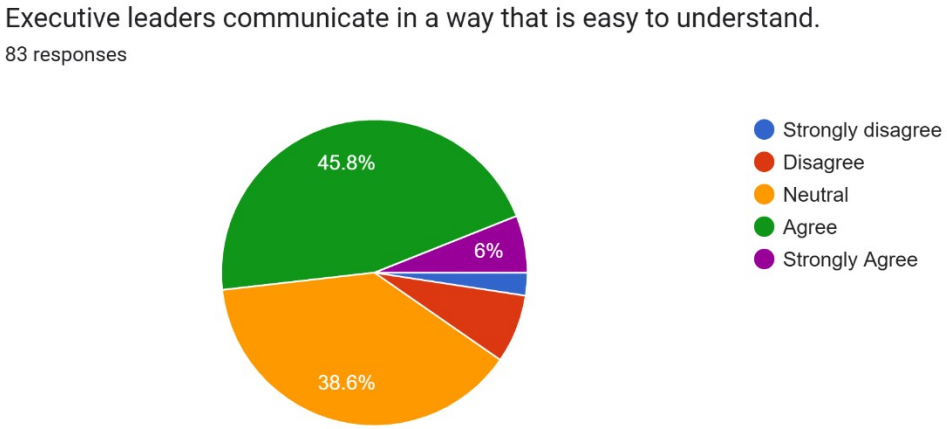
The researcher wanted to find out if executive leaders provided feedback on organisational issues. Most respondents were neutral, accounting for 54.1% of the sample. A total of 36.5% agreed or strongly agreed, while 9.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This suggests a generally neutral-to-positive perception of the statement, with agreement outweighing disagreement. The findings indicate that employees do not have a strongly polarized view of executive communication. Instead, they appear to be cautious or undecided, with some positive perceptions in certain areas. This can be interpreted to mean that executive leaders may be communicating organisational goals and related issues to some extent, but the communication is not yet clear, consistent, or impactful enough to generate strong agreement across the workforce.

4.5.5. EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATION ENCOURAGES EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION



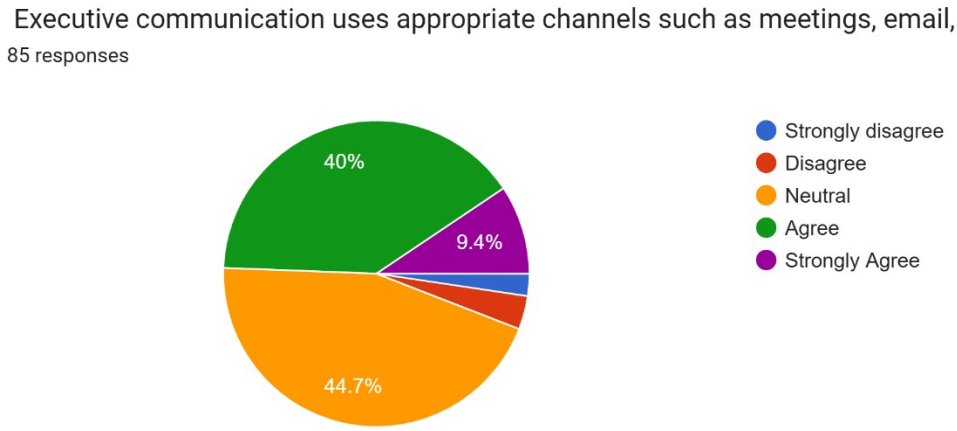
The researcher sought to find out if executive communication encouraged employee participation. Most respondents were neutral, but agreement is also substantial. A combined 45.2% agreed or strongly agreed, compared with 8.3% who disagreed or strongly disagreed. This suggests a moderately positive perception of the statement, with respondents leaning toward agreement more than disagreement.

4.5.6 COMMUNICATION IN WAYS THAT ARE EASY TO UNDERSTAND



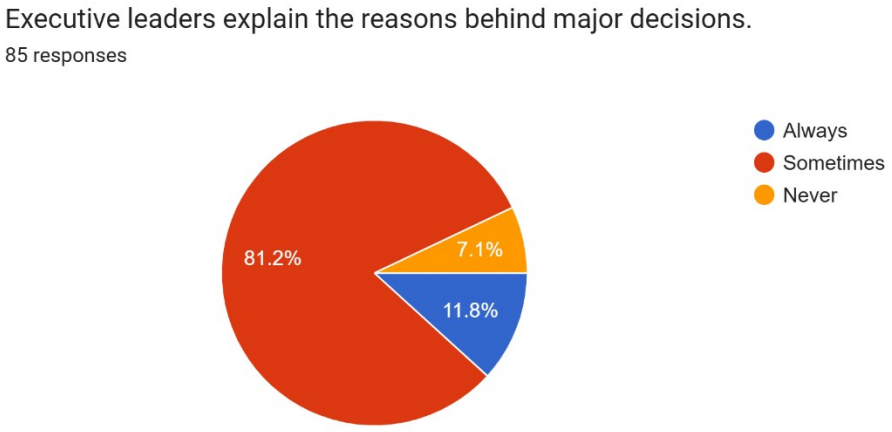
The researcher sought to find out if executive leaders communicated in a way that is easy to understand. The results indicate a generally positive response pattern, with 45.8% of respondents agreeing and 6.0% strongly agreeing. Neutral responses accounted for 38.6%, while only 9.6% of respondents disagreed to any extent, suggesting overall support for the statement.

4.5.7 APPROPRIATE USE OF COMMUNICATION CHANNELS BY EXECUTIVES



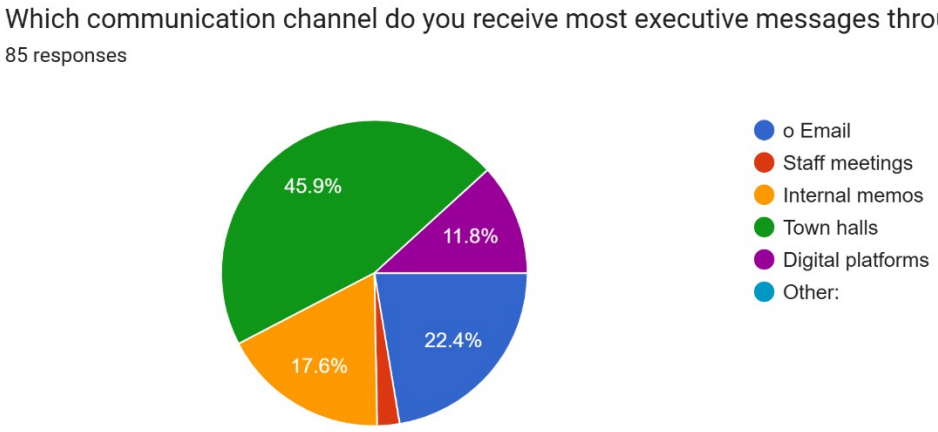
The findings as to whether executives use appropriate channels such as meetings, email, or staff forums to engage with employees indicate a generally positive response pattern, with 40.0% of respondents agreeing and 9.4% strongly agreeing. Neutral responses accounted for 44.7%, while only 5.9% disagreed, suggesting overall support for the statement, although many respondents remained undecided.

4.5.8 LEADERS GIVING REASONS BEHIND MAJOR DECISIONS



The findings indicate that executive leaders explain the reasons behind major decisions only sometimes, as reported by 81.2% of respondents. A further 11.8% stated that leaders always provide such explanations, while 7.1% indicated that this never happens. The results suggest that communication from executive leadership is perceived as inconsistent.

4.5.9 CHANNEL USED TO RECEIVE MOST EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATION



Town halls were the most commonly used channel for receiving executive communication (45.9%), followed by email (22.4%) and internal memos (17.6%). Digital platforms accounted

for 11.8%, while staff meetings were least used (2.4%), indicating that executive communication is primarily disseminated through organisation-wide forums. This suggests that executive communication is received mostly through large, formal, organisation-wide forums rather than smaller or more routine channels. The relatively low use of staff meetings indicates that direct team-level communication is not the primary route for executive messages.

The interviewees from the executive team reported that they use a combination of executive town halls, departmental meetings, emails, intranet platforms, project reviews, team briefings, and face-to-face conversations to communicate important organisational issues. One respondent explained that communication depends on the nature of the issue and noted that executive town halls, departmental meetings, and line managers are used to cascade key messages. Similarly, another director stated that communication is an important leadership tool because it provides direction, aligns teams, and creates a common understanding.

"Communication depends on the nature of the issue," a respondent said, adding that executive town halls, departmental meetings, and line managers are used to cascade key messages.

"Communication is an important leadership tool because it provides direction, aligns teams and creates a common understanding," stated another respondent.

These responses suggest that communication is intentionally structured to help employees understand strategic priorities and how their work connects to the broader mission.

The leaders also indicated that communication strengthens commitment when employees are given context and clarity.

"When people understand where the business is going and how their work contributes to that journey, they become more engaged and committed," one executive explained.

"Employees become more committed when they understand the reason behind decisions rather than simply receiving instructions," another noted.

This shows that executive communication supports commitment by reducing ambiguity and helping employees make sense of organisational direction. The leaders also stressed that employees should not be left behind.

"We should ensure staff receives timely and consistent information so that no one feels left behind," one respondent said.

At the same time, the interviews reveal that one of the biggest challenges is ensuring consistent interpretation across a diverse workforce.

"One of the biggest challenges is ensuring that everyone interprets the message consistently," a leader observed, especially in a large organisation with different functions.

Another added that in periods of change, leaders must remain visible and honest while continuing to provide updates as more information becomes available. This suggests that commitment is most likely to be strengthened when communication is timely, understandable, and followed by visible leadership presence.

4.6 THE DOMINANT COMMUNICATION STYLES EMPLOYED BY EXECUTIVE LEADERS AT KENYA AIRWAYS PLC AND THEIR IMPACT ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

The researcher sought to identify the communication styles used by executive leaders at Kenya Airways and how those styles affected employee engagement.

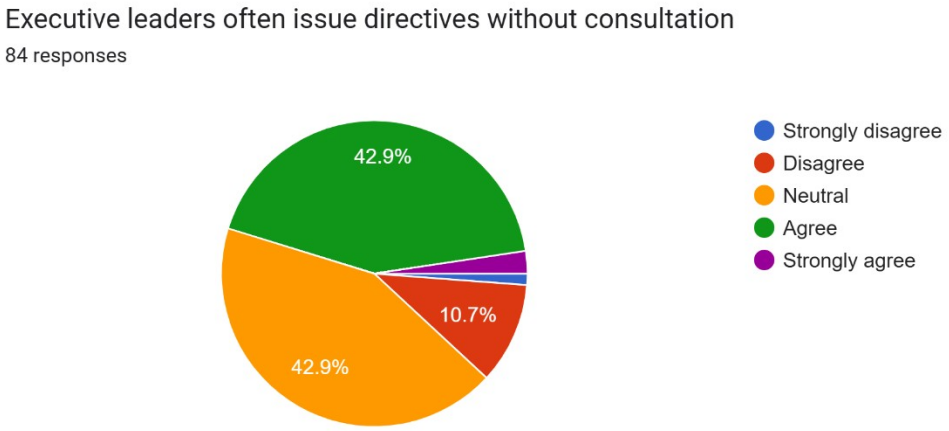
4.6.1 Participative Communication Style.

Response option	Percentage
Strongly disagree	3.5%

Disagree	8.2%
Neutral	51.8%
Agree	34.1%
Strongly agree	2.4%

The findings show that executive leaders are perceived to use a participative communication style to a limited degree, as 51.8% of respondents remained neutral. While 34.1% agreed and 2.4% strongly agreed, 11.7% disagreed, suggesting that participative communication is present but not strongly established. This pattern indicates uncertainty or mixed experiences among respondents. It may mean that participative communication is used in some situations, but not consistently enough for most employees to clearly recognize it.

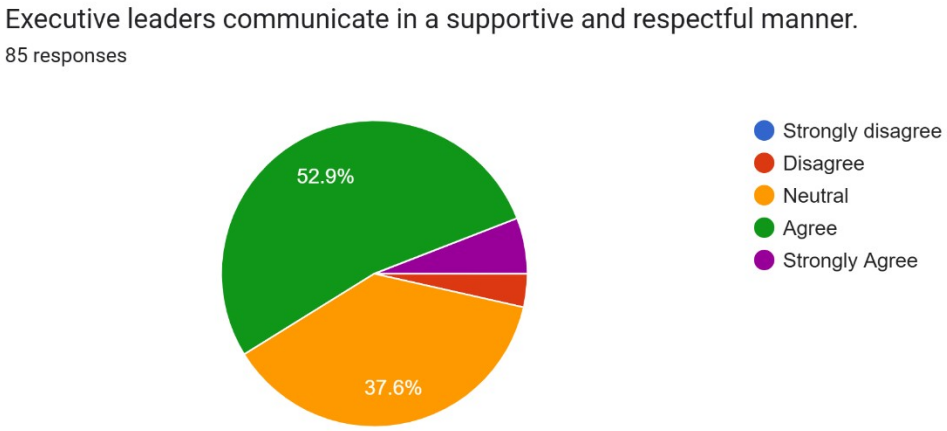
4.6.2 Directive communication style



The results suggest a mixed view on whether executive leaders issue directives without consultation, with respondents split between neutral and agree at 42.9% each. Only 12.0% disagreed overall, which suggests that more respondents perceive this behavior than reject it, but the high neutral share shows no strong consensus. This pattern indicates that a sizeable share of

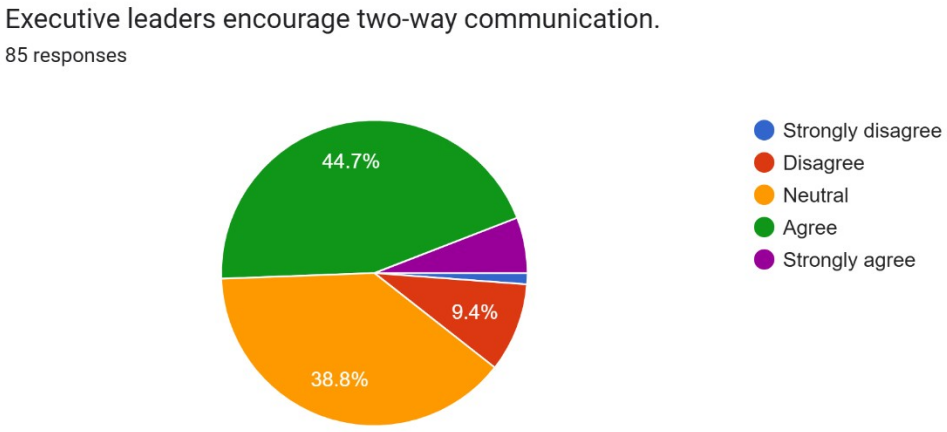
respondents believe directives are issued without consultation, but an equally large neutral group suggests many employees are unsure, uninformed, or have inconsistent experiences. The low combined disagreement implies that relatively few respondents strongly reject the statement.

4.6.3 Supportive Communication approach



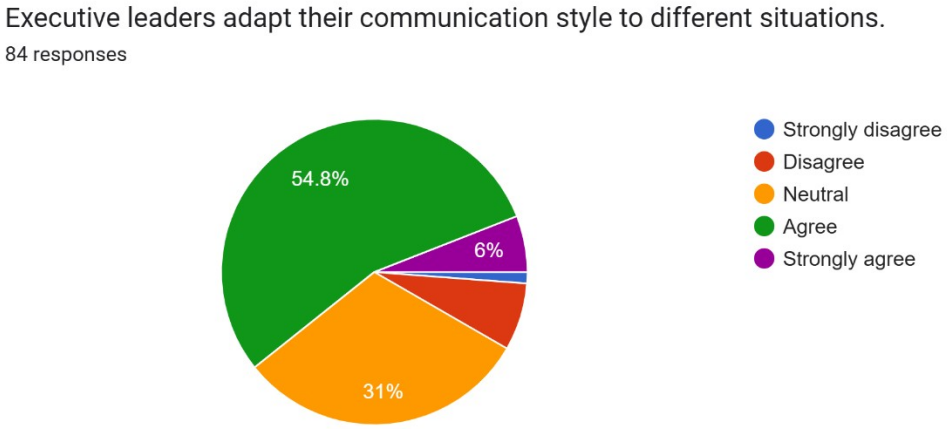
The results suggest a generally positive perception of executive leaders' communication style, with 45.0% agreeing and 5.9% strongly agreeing that it is supportive and respectful. At the same time, 37.6% remained neutral, which shows that a substantial share of respondents were unsure or did not have a strong view. This indicates that executive communication is viewed positively by most respondents, although the large neutral group suggests the perception is not universal.

4.6.4 Two-Way Communication Style



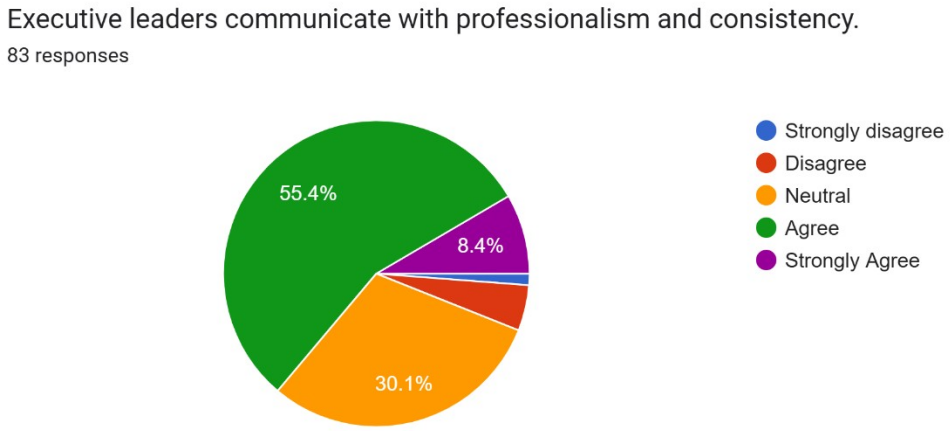
The findings indicate that executive leaders are generally perceived to encourage two-way communication, with 44.7% of respondents agreeing and 5.9% strongly agreeing. A further 38.8% remained neutral, while 15.3% disagreed, suggesting that although the practice is recognized by many, it is not consistently evident to all respondents. This indicates that more respondents perceive two-way communication than reject it, but the fairly large neutral group suggests the practice may not be clearly established across the organisation.

4.6.5 Adaptive Communication Styles



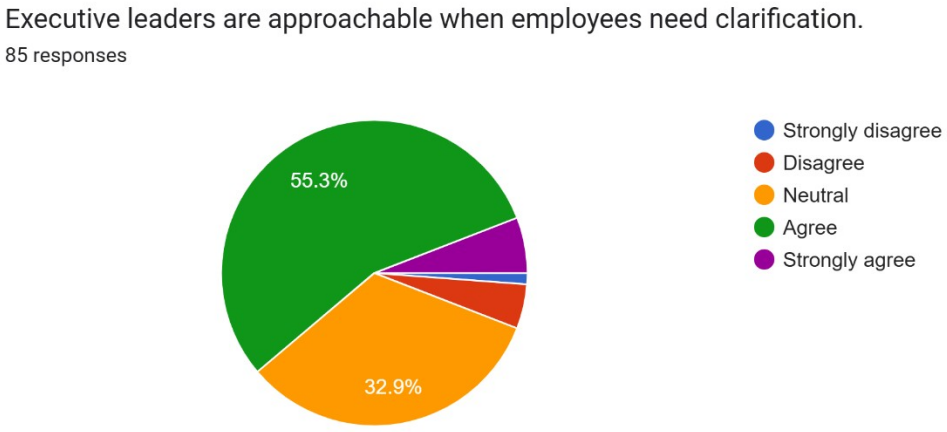
Most respondents agreed that executive leaders adapt their communication style to different situations. A combined 60.8% agreed or strongly agreed, while only 8.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This indicates a generally positive perception of leadership communication flexibility, although about one-third of respondents remained neutral.

4.6.6. Professional And Consistent Communication Styles



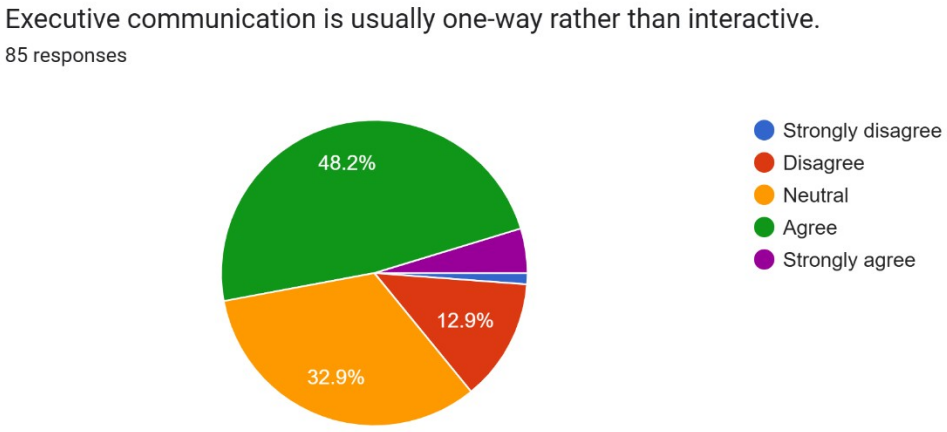
Most respondents agreed that executive leaders communicate with professionalism and consistency. A combined 63.8% agreed or strongly agreed, while only 6.0% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This indicates a strongly positive perception of leadership communication behavior, with relatively few respondents expressing negative views.

4.6.7 Transformational Communication Style



Most respondents agreed that executive leaders are approachable when employees need clarification. A combined 61.2% agreed or strongly agreed, while only 5.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This suggests a positive perception of leadership accessibility, although about one-third of respondents remained neutral.

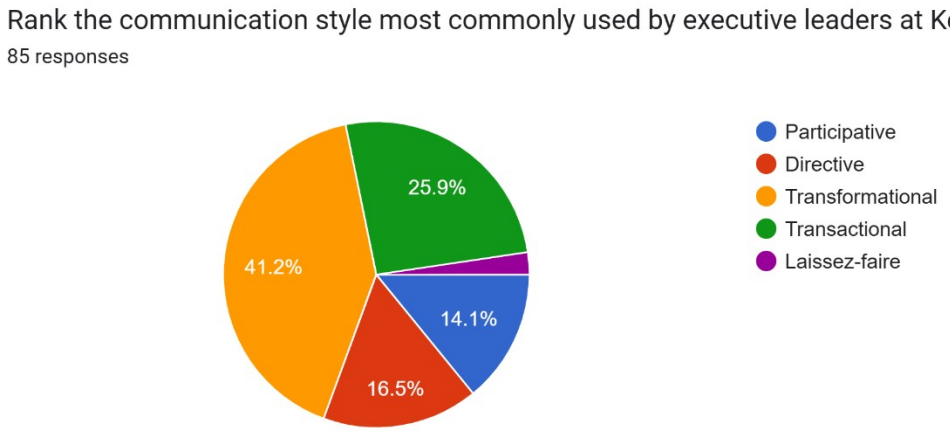
4.6.8 One-Way/ Transactional Communication Style



The responses indicate a generally positive view, but not a very strong one. Most respondents agreed that executive leaders are approachable when employees need clarification, with

42.8% agreeing and 4.7% strongly agreeing, giving a combined positive response of 47.5%. At the same time, 32.9% were neutral, which suggests that a sizeable portion of employees are unsure or have not clearly experienced this approachability. Another 14.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed, showing that some respondents do not view leaders as sufficiently approachable. The data suggest that executive leaders are perceived as somewhat approachable, but the response pattern is mixed. The high neutral response and the presence of disagreement imply that approachability is not consistent across the organisation, and this may affect how easily employees seek clarification when needed.

4.6.9 The Communication Style Most Commonly Used by Executive Leaders at Kenya Airways.



Transformational communication style appears to be the most commonly used by executive leaders at Kenya Airways, followed by transactional style. This suggests that leaders are perceived as more likely to inspire, guide, and influence employees, rather than rely mainly on passive or non-directive communication. The very low score for laissez-faire indicates that this style is least common and has minimal influence in the organisation. The ranking suggests that transformational communication is the dominant style used by executive leaders at Kenya

Airways. This means leaders are seen as mostly inspiring, motivating, and guiding employees through vision and change rather than relying on a purely directive or hands-off approach. Transactional communication ranks second, suggesting that structured instructions, expectations, and performance-related communication are also important. Directive and participative styles are present but less common, showing that leaders use them to a lesser extent when managing employees. The very low score for laissez-faire indicates that passive leadership communication is rarely perceived in the organisation. Overall, the data point to a leadership culture that is mainly active and goal-driven, with transformational communication being the clearest defining style.

From the executive interviews, the interviews show that executive leaders at Kenya Airways largely describe their communication style as open, supportive, direct, transparent, adaptable, and people centred. One executive said the style was open, supportive, and people-centred, while another described it as transparent, direct, and structured. These descriptions suggest that the dominant communication approach is not rigid or authoritarian, but rather relational and responsive to the situation.

"My communication style is open, supportive and people-centered," one leader said.

"I would describe my communication style as transparent, direct and structured," another stated.

The leaders also emphasized that they remain approachable and encourage dialogue, which shows a preference for communication that invites interaction rather than merely issuing instructions.

A strong theme in the interviews is adaptability.

"Different situations require different approaches," one respondent explained, noting that smaller group engagements often create better dialogue and feedback than large forums.

"Leadership requires making decisions, but it is equally important to create space for different opinions," another said.

This indicates that communication is seen as most effective when leaders balance authority with openness. Employees are more likely to engage when they feel they can ask questions, share concerns, and influence discussions before decisions are finalized.

The interviewees also linked engagement to recognition, feedback, and opportunities for contribution.

"People become more engaged when they know their voices matter," one leader observed.

"Engagement is strengthened when employees are given opportunities to contribute ideas, recognize achievements, and receive constructive feedback," another said.

One executive went further and noted that leaders should encourage employees to challenge the status quo and become positive disruptors who drive innovation. This shows that employee engagement is strengthened when communication empowers staff rather than simply informing them.

The interviews also reveal that communication is tied closely to leadership example.

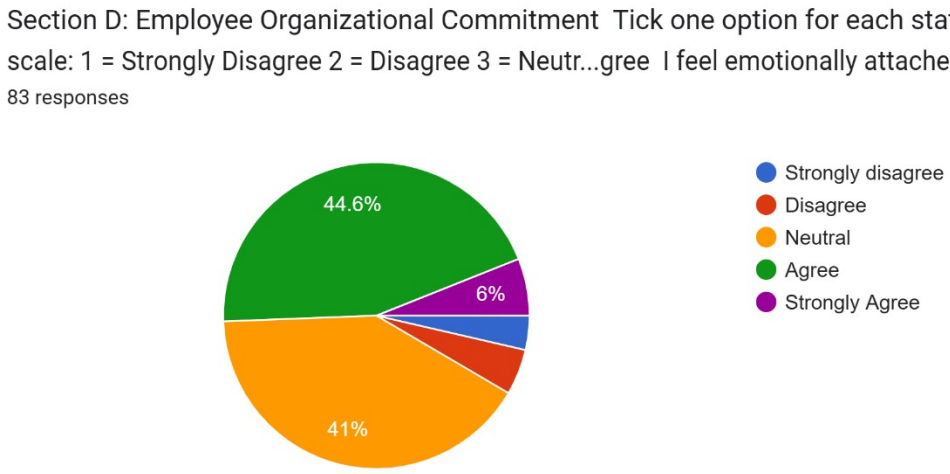
"Employees do not just listen to messages; they observe leadership behavior," one executive noted.

"Communication should reflect integrity, accountability, teamwork, and professionalism in both words and actions," another added.

This suggests that engagement is strengthened when employees see consistency between what leaders say and what they do.

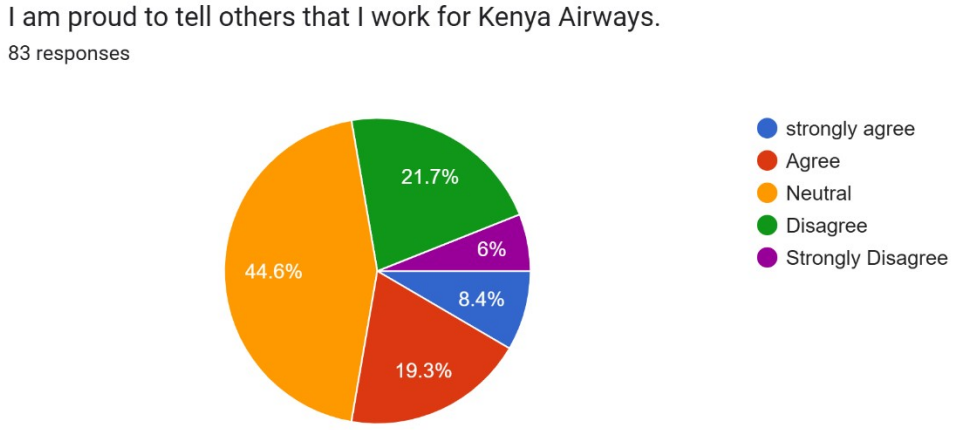
4.7 THE INFLUENCE OF EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES ON EMPLOYEE TRUST AND LOYALTY WITHIN THE ORGANISATION.

4.7.1 Emotional Attachment to Kenya Airways



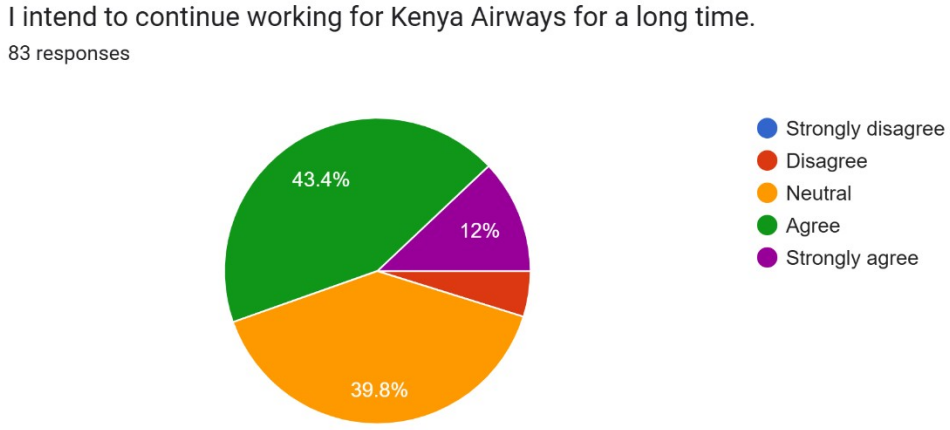
The responses show a generally positive emotional attachment to Kenya Airways. A combined 50.6% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, which suggests that more than half of the sample feels some level of attachment to the organisation. However, 41.0% were neutral, which is quite high and indicates that many employees are undecided or do not feel a strong emotional connection. Only 8.4% disagreed or strongly disagreed, so negative attachment is relatively low. The data suggest that emotional attachment to Kenya Airways exists, but it is not especially strong across the whole sample. The large neutral share implies that employee attachment may be moderate rather than deeply felt, and this could affect commitment, loyalty, and willingness to go beyond formal job expectations.

4.7.2 Feeling of Pride Working for Kenya Airways.



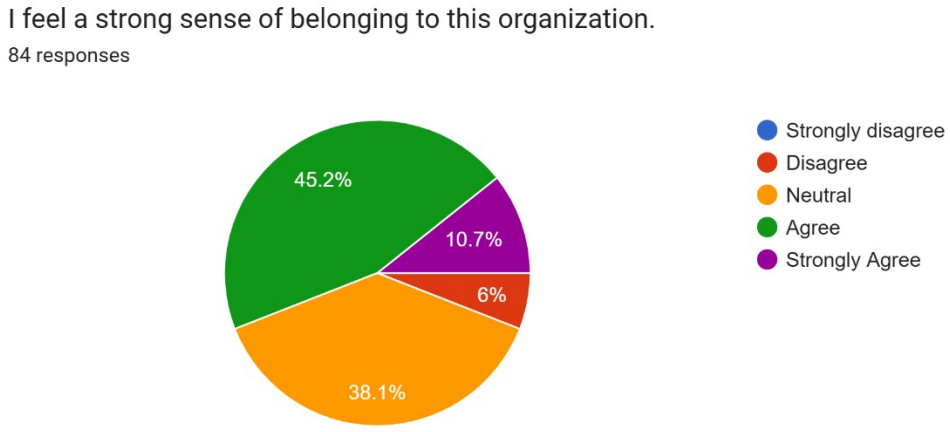
The responses suggest a weak sense of organisational pride among employees. Although 27.7% agreed or strongly agreed that they are proud to tell others they work for Kenya Airways, a much larger 44.6% remained neutral, which points to uncertainty or only moderate identification with the organisation. The 27.7% who disagreed or strongly disagreed is also notable, because it shows that over a quarter of respondents do not feel proud enough to openly associate themselves with the airline. That level of negative response may reflect concerns about organisational image, employee experience, or internal morale. The data indicate that pride in belonging to Kenya Airways is not strongly established across the sample. The high neutral response, combined with a sizeable level of disagreement, suggests that organisational identification may be present for some employees but is not yet widespread or deeply rooted.

4.7.3 Loyalty to Continue Working for Kenya Airways.



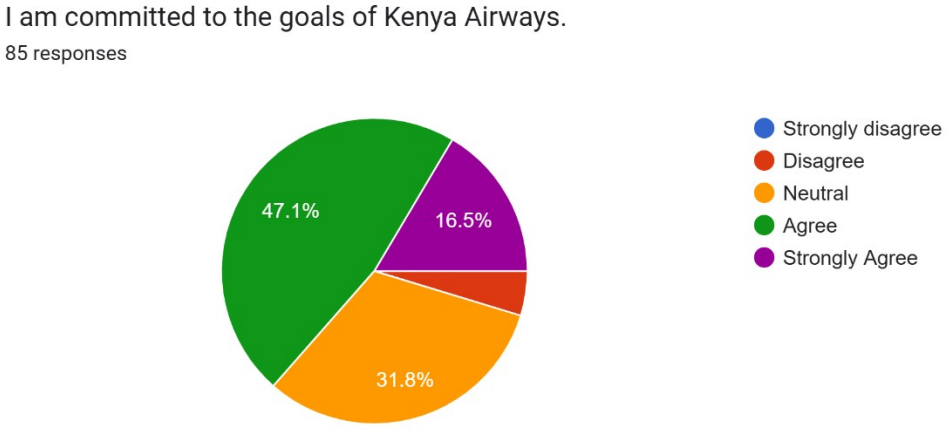
The responses suggest a fairly positive intention to remain with Kenya Airways for the long term. A combined 55.4% agreed or strongly agreed, which shows that more than half of the respondents have some commitment to staying with the organisation. At the same time, 39.8% were neutral, which is a substantial share and suggests that many employees are uncertain about their future with the airline. Only 4.8% disagreed, and none strongly disagreed, so clear intention to leave appears low in this item. The data indicate moderate retention intent among employees. The high neutral response means long-term commitment is present, but not strongly fixed across the sample, which may reflect caution, career uncertainty, or conditional loyalty.

4.7.4 Strong Sense of Belonging to This Organisation.



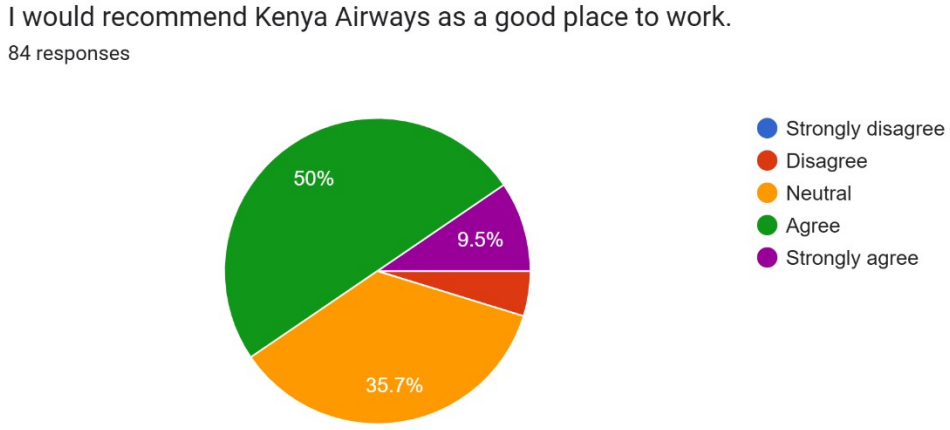
The responses show a generally positive sense of belonging to the organisation. A combined 55.9% agreed or strongly agreed, which suggests that more than half of the respondents feel connected to Kenya Airways. However, 38.1% were neutral, which is still a large proportion and indicates that many employees are not fully committed emotionally or do not strongly identify with the organisation. Only 6.0% disagreed, and none strongly disagreed, so negative belonging is minimal. The data point to moderate organisational belonging. The positive responses outweigh the negative ones, but the high neutral share suggests that belonging is present for many employees without being especially strong across the whole sample.

4.7.5 Commitment to the Goals of Kenya Airways.



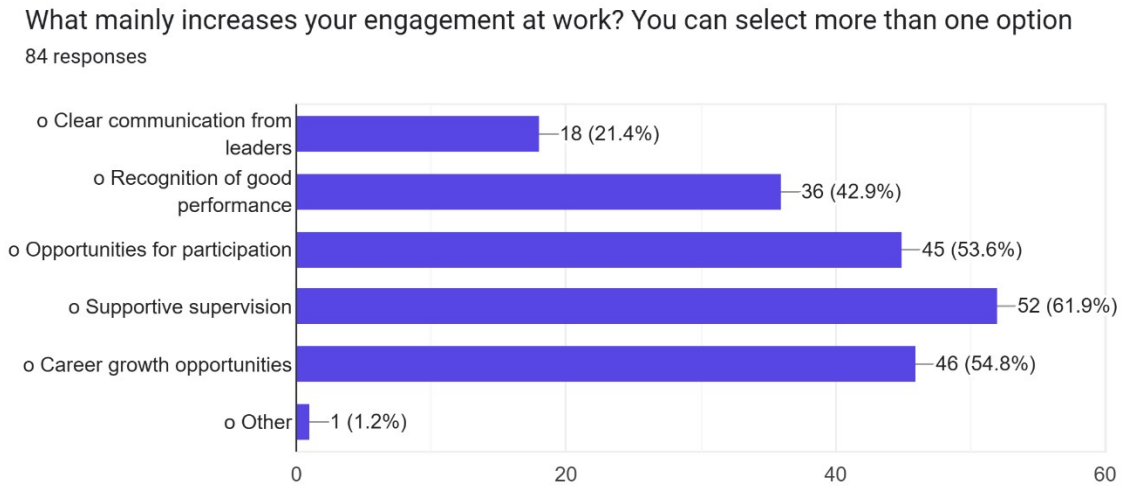
The responses show a strong commitment to the goals of Kenya Airways. A combined 63.6% agreed or strongly agreed, which indicates that most respondents identify with and support the organisation's goals. At the same time, 31.8% were neutral, suggesting that about one-third of the sample is uncertain or not fully convinced. Only 4.7% disagreed, and none strongly disagreed, so resistance to the organisation's goals is very low. The data point to a positive level of organisational commitment. The high agreement suggests that many employees are aligned with Kenya Airways' goals, although the large neutral group shows that this commitment is not yet universal.

4.7.6 Willingness to Recommend Kenya Airways as a Good Place to Work



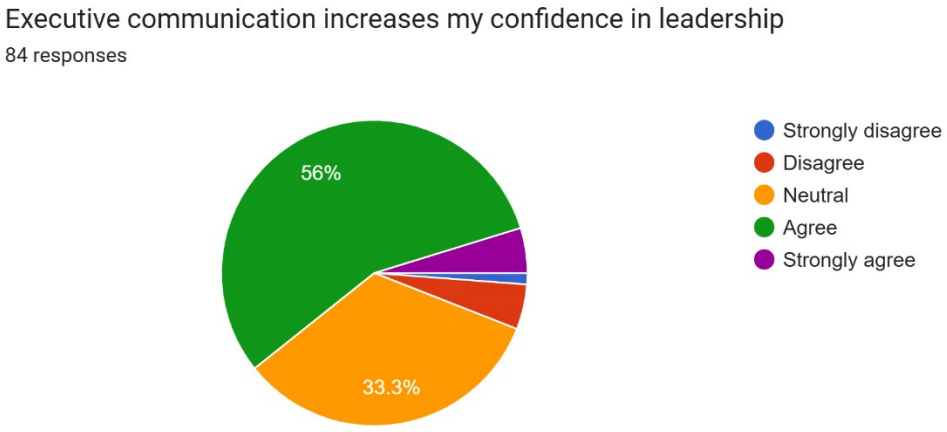
The responses indicate a generally positive view of Kenya Airways as a place to work. A combined 59.5% agreed or strongly agreed, which suggests that most respondents would recommend the organisation to others. However, 35.7% were neutral, showing that a fairly large group is undecided and may not feel strongly enough to recommend the company with confidence. Only 4.8% disagreed, and none strongly disagreed, so negative sentiment is very low. The data suggest that Kenya Airways is viewed favourably as an employer, but the high neutral share means the employee experience is not yet strong enough for everyone to actively endorse it. This may reflect mixed workplace experiences, varying departmental conditions, or cautious attitudes toward the organisation.

4.7.7 Reasons for an employee's Increased Engagement at Work



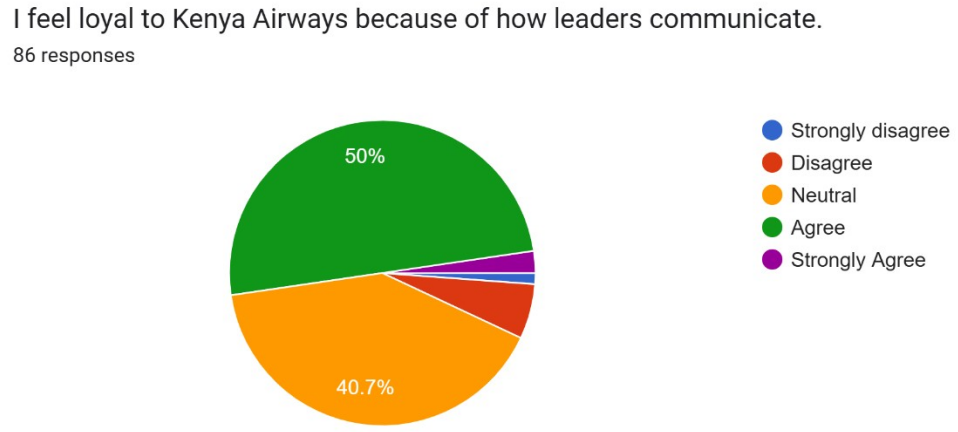
Supportive supervision was the strongest factor increasing employee engagement at work, selected by 61.9% of respondents. This was followed by career growth opportunities at 54.8% and opportunities for participation at 53.6%. Recognition of good performance was also important at 42.9%, while clear communication from leaders was selected by 21.4% of respondents. Overall, the findings suggest that employee engagement is mainly strengthened by supportive leadership, participation, and growth opportunities. This pattern suggests that employees are most engaged when they receive support from supervisors, see chances for advancement, and are allowed to participate in decisions or activities. In other words, engagement is driven more by people-centered leadership and growth-related factors than by communication alone. Clear communication still matters, but it appears to be less influential than supervision, recognition, and involvement.

4.7.8 Executive Communication Increase in Leadership confidence



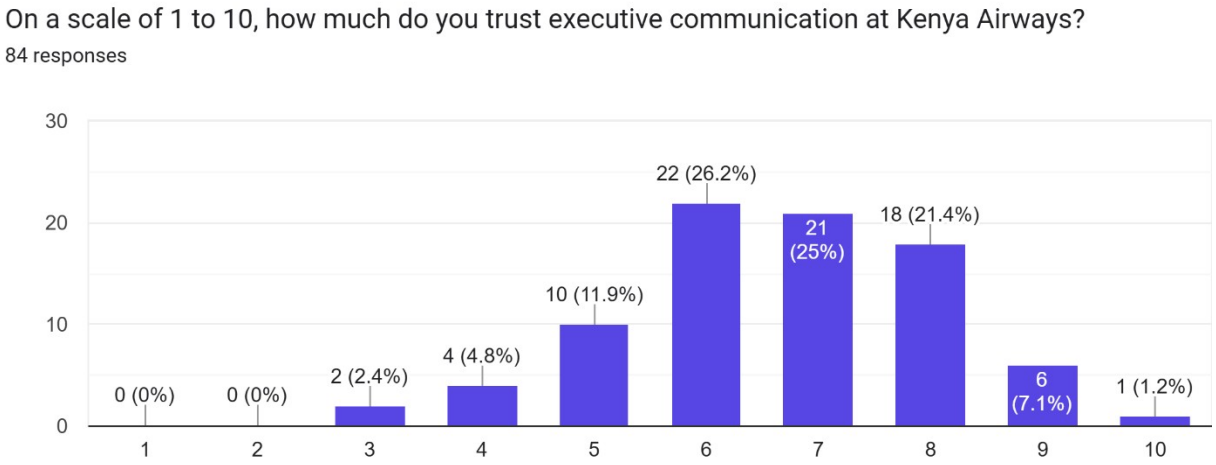
Most respondents agreed that executive communication increases their confidence in leadership. A combined 60.8% agreed or strongly agreed, which shows that executive communication has a positive effect on leadership confidence for the majority of employees. At the same time, 33.3% were neutral, indicating that about one-third of respondents are uncertain or only partly influenced by executive communication. Only 6.0% disagreed or strongly disagreed, so negative views are minimal. The results suggest that executive communication plays an important role in strengthening confidence in leadership. The positive responses clearly outweigh the negative ones, although the large neutral group shows that this effect is not equally strong for everyone.

4.7.9 Loyalty to Kenya Airways Because Of How Leaders Communicate.



Most respondents agreed that they feel loyal to Kenya Airways because of how leaders communicate. A combined 52.3% agreed or strongly agreed, which suggests that executive communication is contributing positively to employee loyalty. At the same time, 40.7% were neutral, which is fairly high and shows that many employees are uncertain or do not feel strongly enough to link loyalty directly to leadership communication. Only 7.0% disagreed or strongly disagreed, so negative responses are minimal. The data indicate a moderate positive relationship between executive communication and employee loyalty. However, the large neutral share suggests that this influence is not very strong or is not experienced consistently across the workforce.

4.7.10 Employee Level of Trust in Executive Communication at Kenya Airways



Responses on a scale of 1 to 10 indicate a moderate to fairly positive level of trust in executive communication at Kenya Airways. The most common rating was 6 (26.2%), followed closely by 7 (25.0%) and 8 (21.4%). Very low trust ratings were rare, with no respondents selecting 1 or 2, and only 2.4% selecting 3. The findings suggest that employees generally trust executive communication, although the level of trust is not yet very strong. The concentration around the middle-to-upper range suggests confidence is present, though there is still room to strengthen consistency, credibility, and clarity in leadership communication.

The interview responses strongly suggest that trust is built through honesty, consistency, transparency, accessibility, and follow-through.

"Trust is built through consistency, honesty and following through on commitments," one executive said.

Another emphasized that employees trust leaders when communication is timely, transparent, and aligned with action.

"Employees trust leaders when communication is timely, transparent and aligned with our actions," a respondent explained.

These comments show that trust is understood as a product of credibility rather than rhetoric.

The leaders also stressed the importance of communication during uncertainty.

"During uncertainty, leaders should communicate more frequently rather than less," one executive said.

"It is better to share what is known than allow speculation to fill the gap," another observed.

This is important because it shows that silence is seen as risky and potentially damaging to trust. A leader noted that during uncertainty, employees appreciate honesty about the situation, the direction being taken, and the support available to them. These remarks suggest that communication helps preserve trust by reducing fear, confusion, and rumours.

The interviews also connected trust to loyalty.

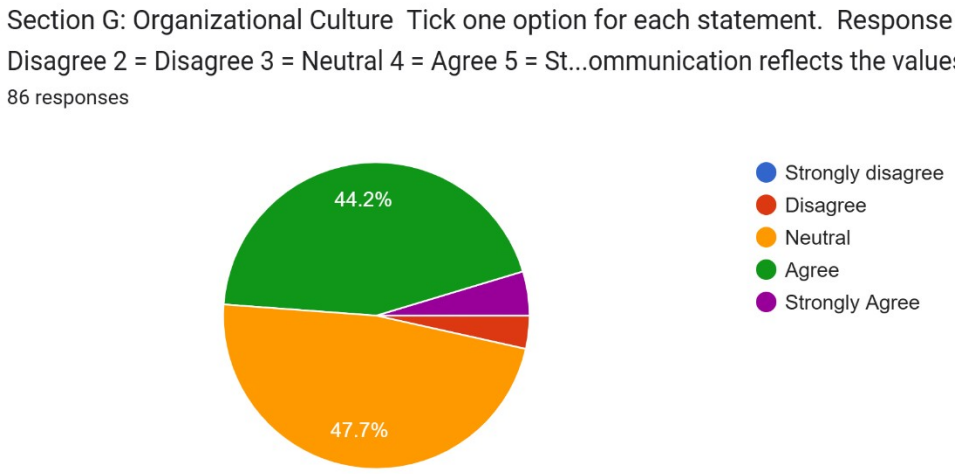
"Employees are more likely to trust leadership when they see fairness in decision-making and communication that reflects the organisation's values," one executive explained.

"People should feel they can raise concerns openly and receive honest feedback from leadership," another said.

This points to a relationship in which trust leads to confidence in the organisation, and confidence supports loyalty. In the commercial context, one executive added that integrity is especially important because teams work closely with customers and partners where there is little room for ambiguity. This highlights the idea that loyalty depends on leadership communication that is dependable, ethical, and consistent.

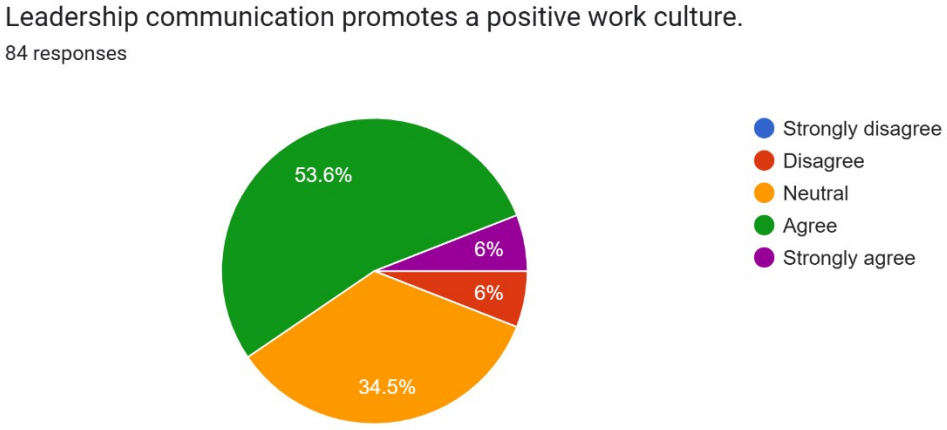
4.8 HOW EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATION CONTRIBUTES TO THE REINFORCEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AT KENYA AIRWAYS PLC.

4.8.1 How Executive Communication Reflects the Values of Kenya Airways.



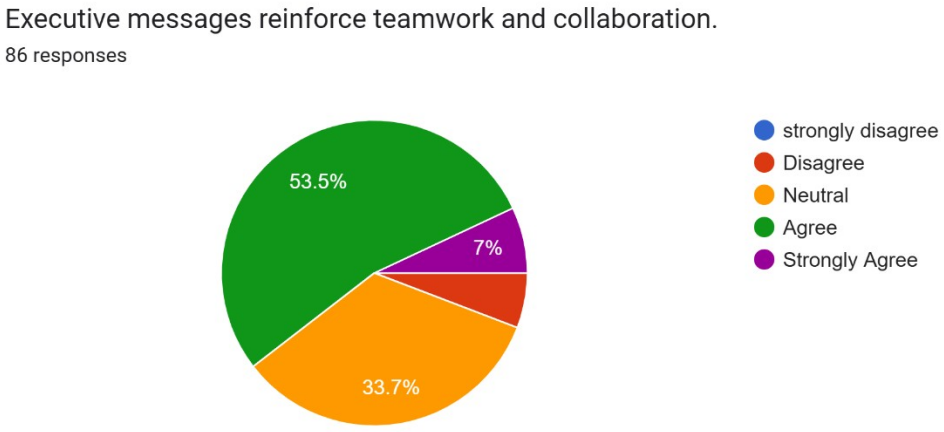
The responses suggest a moderately positive view that executive communication reflects the values of Kenya Airways. A combined 48.9% agreed or strongly agreed, which means just under half of the respondents see leadership communication as aligned with the organisation's values. However, 47.7% were neutral, which is very high and shows that many employees are uncertain or do not have a clear opinion on this issue. Only 3.5% disagreed, and none strongly disagreed, so outright negative views are minimal. The findings indicate that executive communication is perceived as somewhat value-driven, but this perception is not strong across the workforce. The large neutral response suggests that leaders may need to communicate organisational values more visibly and consistently for employees to recognize them more clearly.

4.8.2 Leadership Communication Promoting a Positive Work Culture.



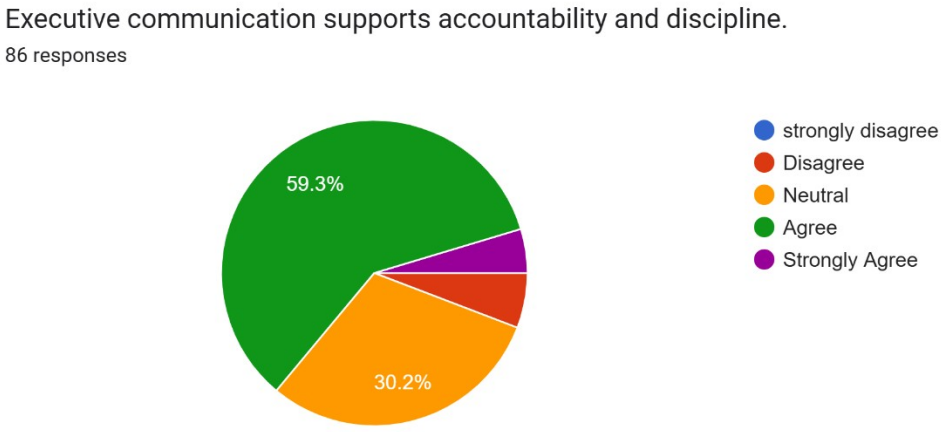
The responses show a positive view that leadership communication promotes a positive work culture. A combined 59.6% agreed or strongly agreed, which suggests that most respondents see executive communication as helping create a constructive workplace environment. At the same time, 34.5% were neutral, which is still a substantial share and indicates that many employees are unsure or do not strongly feel this effect. Only 6.0% disagreed, and none strongly disagreed, so negative responses are low. The data suggest that leadership communication is generally seen as supportive of a positive work culture, but the effect is not universal. The large neutral group implies that communication may be contributing to culture in some parts of the organisation more than others.

4.8.3 Executive Messages Reinforcing Teamwork and Collaboration.



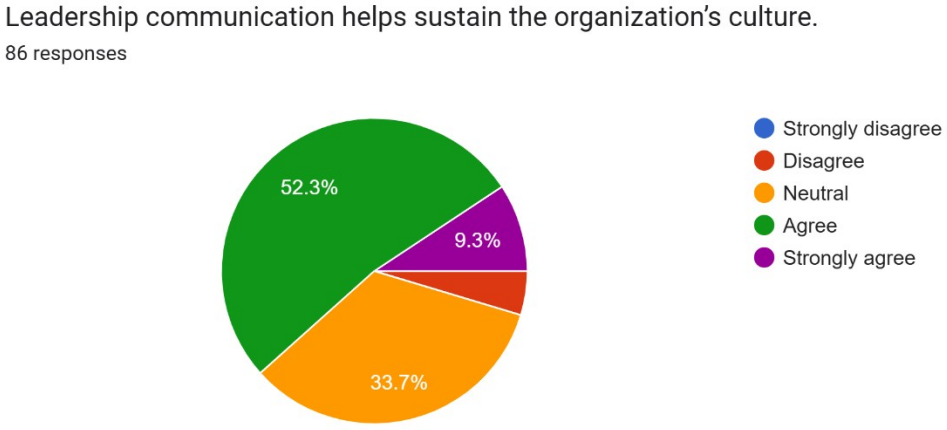
The responses indicate a positive view that executive messages reinforce teamwork and collaboration. A combined 60.5% agreed or strongly agreed, which suggests that most respondents see leadership communication as supporting cooperation among employees. At the same time, 33.7% were neutral, showing that about one-third of respondents are uncertain or do not strongly experience this effect. Only 5.8% disagreed, and none strongly disagreed, so negative views are minimal. The data suggest that executive communication is generally effective in promoting teamwork and collaboration. However, the large neutral group implies that this influence is not yet strong or consistent for all employees.

4.8.4 Executive Communication Support for Accountability and Discipline.



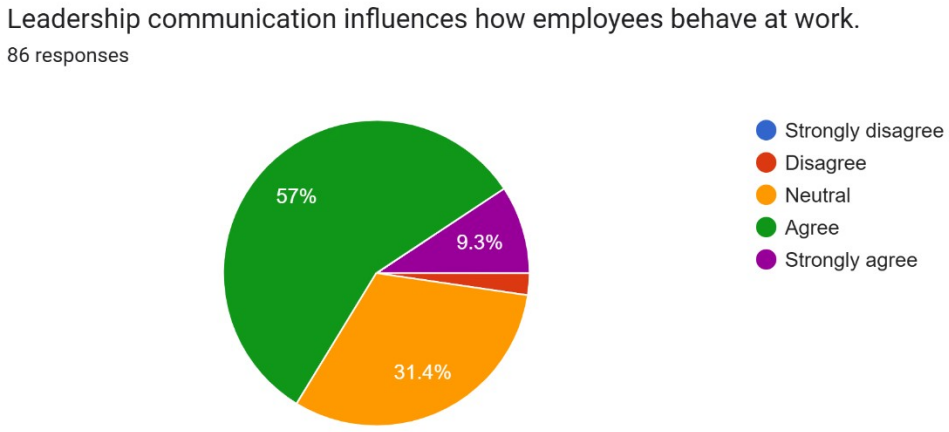
The responses suggest a positive perception that executive communication supports accountability and discipline. A combined 64.0% agreed or strongly agreed, which indicates that most respondents believe leadership communication helps reinforce responsible behavior and adherence to standards. At the same time, 30.2% were neutral, showing that nearly one-third of the respondents are unsure or do not strongly associate executive communication with accountability and discipline. Only 5.8% disagreed, and none strongly disagreed, so negative views are limited. Findings indicate that executive communication is generally seen as effective in promoting accountability and discipline. However, the sizeable neutral group suggests that this influence may not be experienced consistently across all employees or departments.

4.8.5 Leadership Communication Helping to Sustain the Organisation's Culture.



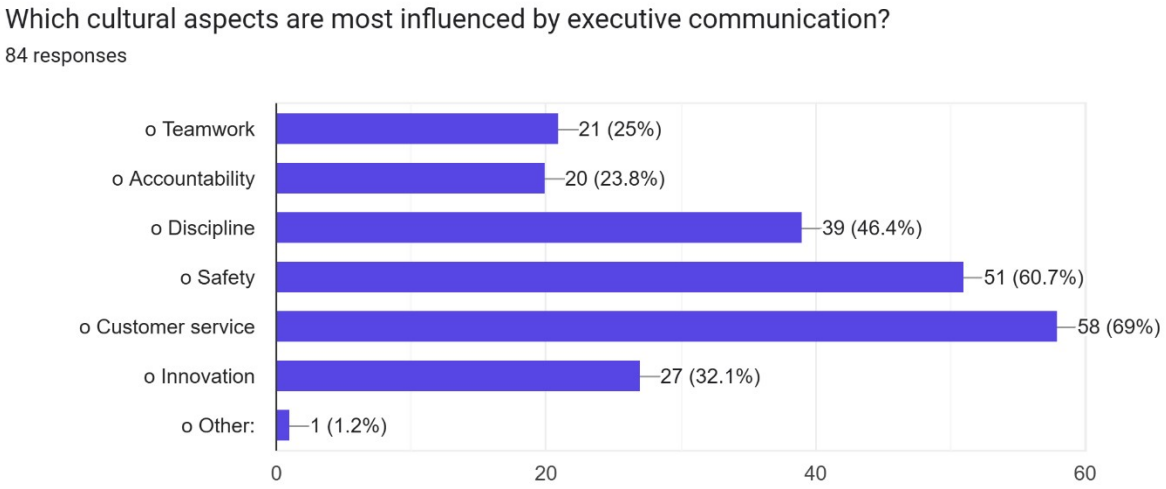
The responses show a positive view that leadership communication helps sustain the organisation's culture. A combined 61.6% agreed or strongly agreed, indicating that most respondents believe executive communication plays an important role in maintaining shared values, norms, and workplace identity. At the same time, 33.7% were neutral, which suggests that about one-third of the respondents are unsure or do not strongly experience this effect. Only 4.7% disagreed, and none strongly disagreed, so negative perceptions are minimal. The findings suggest that leadership communication is generally effective in sustaining organisational culture. However, the sizeable neutral group implies that this influence is not yet fully visible or consistent across the entire workforce.

4.8.6 Leadership Communication Influencing Employees Behaviour at Work.



The responses show a positive perception that leadership communication influences how employees behave at work. A combined 66.3% agreed or strongly agreed, which indicates that most respondents believe executive communication shapes workplace behavior. 31.4% were neutral, suggesting that nearly one-third of the respondents are unsure or do not strongly feel this influence. Only 2.3% disagreed, and none strongly disagreed, so negative responses are very low. The data suggest that leadership communication has a meaningful effect on employee behavior at work. The high agreement level indicates that communication from leaders is widely seen as an important driver of conduct, though the neutral group shows that this influence is not equally strong for everyone.

4.8.7 Cultural Aspects Most Influenced by Executive Communication



Customer service was the cultural aspect most influenced by executive communication, selected by 69% of respondents. This was followed by safety at 60.7% and discipline at 46.4%. Teamwork, innovation, and accountability were selected by smaller proportions of respondents, indicating that executive communication is perceived to have the greatest influence on operational and service-related aspects of organisational culture. This shows that leadership messages are most strongly associated with operational and service-related values rather than abstract cultural dimensions. Teamwork, accountability, and innovation are also influenced, but to a lesser extent.

4.8.8 How Executive Communication Influences Organisational Culture of Kenya Airways

From the qualitative feedback collected, Executive communication appears to influence Kenya Airways' culture mainly by building teamwork, trust, belonging, direction, and accountability, while also shaping how informed and motivated employees feel. It is seen as most helpful when it provides clear goals, timely updates, and a sense of shared purpose.

From the responses, the strongest themes are: better teamwork and collaboration, Greater trust in leaders and organisational messages, A stronger sense of belonging, pride, and ownership, Clearer direction and understanding of company goals, Improved motivation, morale, and engagement, better customer service and customer-centered behavior, and Support for change management, innovation, and future focus.

Respondents indicated that executive communication influences the culture of Kenya Airways by promoting teamwork, trust, belonging, ownership, and clearer organisational direction. It was also viewed as important in motivating staff, improving customer service, supporting change management, and strengthening employee pride in the organisation. However, some respondents noted that communication is occasionally weak, uncertain, or insufficiently consultative, which can create confusion and negatively affect culture. Executive communication is perceived as a key driver of organisational culture, especially when it is clear, timely, and inclusive."

The interviews show that executive communication is viewed as central to reflecting and reinforcing Kenya Airways' values. The leaders repeatedly referred to integrity, accountability, teamwork, professionalism, customer focus, and innovation as values that should be expressed through communication.

"Communication reflects values when leaders demonstrate them in the way they interact with people, make decisions, and recognize performance," one executive noted.

"Values should not only appear in presentations but should be evident in how we engage our employees, our customers and our commercial partners every day," another said.

This indicates that communication is understood as a cultural practice, not just a verbal one.

A clear recurring idea is that employees watch leadership behavior closely.

"Employees observe leadership behavior more than they simply listen to messages," one respondent said.

"Culture is shaped by consistent leadership behaviour as much as by the messages communicated," another added.

This suggests that executive communication contributes to organisational culture when it is aligned with visible leadership actions.

The interviews also show that communication supports teamwork, accountability, and discipline by clarifying expectations and reducing misunderstandings.

"Clear communication aligns expectations and strengthens accountability," one leader said.

"Leadership communication helps teams work toward common objectives," another noted.

"Leaders reinforce accountability by recognizing good performance and addressing issues consistently," a respondent added.

These responses suggest that communication is a mechanism for standard-setting, coordination, and behavioral control within the organisation.

Another important cultural theme is the idea of storytelling and organisational identity.

"We should consistently tell the Kenya Airways story in a way that inspires pride and keeps our people connected to our purpose," one respondent said.

This statement is significant because it shows that communication is also viewed as a way of sustaining collective identity and pride. Employees are more likely to identify with the organisation when leadership communication helps them understand its story, purpose, and direction.

4.8.9 Communication Practices by Executive Leaders That Work Best at Kenya Airways

Respondents indicated that the communication practices that work best at Kenya Airways include town halls, emails, memos, timely updates, and interactive feedback sessions. These practices are valued because they provide clarity, reduce uncertainty, and allow employees to receive information directly from leaders. Participants also emphasized the importance of transparency, honesty, and consultation before major decisions are made. The findings suggest that the most effective executive communication practices are those that are timely, open, detailed, and participatory.

Ranked practices from the responses collected

Communication practice	**Why it works**	**Responses**
Town halls / virtual town halls	They allow leaders to reach many staff at once, explain decisions, and answer questions directly.	"Townhalls," "Town halls work well," "Virtual town halls."
Emails	They are useful for formal, timely, and detailed updates.	"Emails work well," "Quick email updates," "Email communication."
Memos	They help share clear internal information officially.	"The memos are well detailed," "Comprehensive memos for updates."
Transparent updates	They build trust by being honest about what is happening.	"Being truthful about what's going on," "Transparency in communication."
Interactive feedback sessions	They allow staff to contribute views and feel consulted.	"Townhall feedback sessions," "Can they be doing polls before making decisions."
WhatsApp / digital platforms	They provide fast, real-time updates and are convenient.	"Digital communication via WhatsApp has been working very well."
Physical meetings / office visits	They create personal connection and make communication feel direct.	"Walk ins - office visits," "I love the physical sessions."

The responses show that the best practices are those that are clear, timely, and two-way. Town halls and emails stand out most because they combine reach with clarity, while memos and WhatsApp support faster and more structured communication.

4.8.10 Suggested Improvements for Executive Communication at Kenya Airways

The main improvements suggested by the respondents include more frequent, timely, honest, and engaging communication with staff. Respondents also reported that they want more consultation, more physical engagement, and communication that is simpler, clearer, and more humane.

The following were the Suggested improvements from the respondents; Provide more regular updates so staff are not left in the dark, Summarize messages so key points are easy to understand, “Follow up on promises and announcements to show accountability, Tailor communication to specific staff needs and sections, Increase staff involvement through polls, feedback sessions, and decision-making input, Use more physical meetings, barasas, walk-ins, and section meetings to balance virtual communication, Be more honest, open, and direct, especially during disruptions or major decisions, Use simpler, short memos and more explainer communication for complex issues, Strengthen staff engagement through activities, sports days, and peer discussions and Communicate in a more humane, unified, and inclusive way.”

A strong pattern in the responses is that employees are not asking for completely new channels as much as they are asking for better communication quality. They want communication that is clearer, more regular, more personal, and more responsive to staff concerns. Several respondents also emphasized that leaders should stop hiding information and should explain major decisions more fully.

Respondents suggested that executive communication at Kenya Airways could be improved through more regular and timely updates, clearer summaries of key messages, and stronger

follow-up on promises made. They also recommended more staff consultation, feedback sessions, polls, and physical meetings to strengthen participation and inclusion. In addition, respondents emphasized the need for more honest, open, and humane communication, particularly during disruptions and major organisational decisions. Overall, the findings indicate that executive communication can be improved by making it more transparent, engaging, and employee centred. Several themes appeared across all the interviews. First, transparency and honesty were repeatedly emphasized as essential to effective executive communication. Second, leaders consistently valued two-way communication, dialogue, and feedback. Third, they all linked communication to employee commitment, engagement, trust, loyalty, and culture. Fourth, they viewed communication as something that must be both informative and relational.

"Communication should be timely, transparent and relevant," one leader said.

"Leaders should communicate early and often," another emphasized.

These statements collectively show that executive leaders at Kenya Airways see communication as a core leadership responsibility.

Emphasis also varied by role. The Chief People Officer focused more on culture, employee connection, and internal alignment. The Director of Innovation emphasized adaptability, smaller group engagement, and safe spaces for idea-sharing. The Director of Special Projects highlighted clarity, simplicity, and consistency. The Chief Commercial and Customer Officer focused strongly on timing, responsibility, and credibility in communication. Despite these differences, all four leaders shared the belief that executive communication works best when it is honest, interactive, and aligned with the organisation's values.

The interview findings deepen the quantitative results by showing how executive leaders themselves understand communication at Kenya Airways. Their responses suggest that executive

communication is a deliberate leadership practice used to guide employees, build trust, encourage engagement, and reinforce culture through clarity, openness, accessibility, and consistency.

"Communication is about creating an environment where people feel respected, empowered and inspired to contribute to the success of the organisation," one executive concluded.

This captures the central qualitative insight of the interviews: executive communication is most effective when it is human, credible, and connected to purpose.

4.9 Discussion of findings

4.9.1 Communication channels and organisational commitment

The findings show that executive communication at Kenya Airways influences organisational commitment mainly through the channels leaders use, the clarity of the messages they deliver, and the extent to which employees feel included in key organisational matters. Town halls, emails, memos, and digital updates were identified as the main channels through which employees receive communication from top leadership. These channels are important because they allow executives to share strategic information, explain decisions, and connect with employees across different departments. However, the results also show that many respondents remained neutral on whether executive leaders communicate organisational goals clearly or share information on time. This suggests that although communication channels exist, they are not always experienced as consistent, participatory, or sufficiently clear. As a result, the influence of executive communication on commitment appears moderate rather than very strong.

This aligns with the empirical literature, which argues that communication channels affect commitment by shaping clarity, timeliness, and interactivity. Men (2014) and Miheso (2020)

found that digital and face-to-face communication can strengthen affective commitment when employees feel informed and valued. Similarly, Ma et al. (2022) noted that transparent and multidirectional communication builds trust and emotional attachment, while one-way communication weakens engagement. The Kenya Airways findings support this view, since employees responded positively to town halls and email-based communication, but they also wanted more regular updates, clearer explanations, and stronger follow-up. Therefore, the study confirms that channel choice matters, but it also shows that the effectiveness of those channels depends on how transparent and responsive the communication is. In APA style, this point can be cited as follows: communication channels influence commitment when they reduce uncertainty and support employee inclusion (Men, 2014; Ma et al., 2022; Miheso, 2020).

4.9.2 Communication style and employee engagement

The study found that transformational communication is the dominant communication style used by executive leaders at Kenya Airways, followed by transactional communication. This means that leaders are perceived as more likely to inspire, guide, and motivate employees than to rely purely on passive or hands-off communication. Transformational communication is especially important in shaping employee engagement because it helps employees see the bigger picture, understand organisational goals, and feel connected to a shared purpose. The findings also suggest that leaders are generally professional, consistent, supportive, and approachable when employees need clarification. These qualities can strengthen engagement by making employees feel respected and valued.

This finding is consistent with the empirical review, which showed that transformational communication is the style most strongly linked to employee engagement in service organisations. Salanova et al. (2005) found that transformational rhetoric improved engagement

over time, while Men (2014) showed that visionary communication increased perceived responsiveness and relationship quality. The Kenya Airways findings support those studies because respondents described executive leaders as inspirational and direction-setting. At the same time, the results also show that participative and two-way communication are not consistently experienced. This means that while leaders may communicate direction and expectations effectively, employees do not always feel actively involved in the communication process. The literature explains that engagement becomes stronger when communication is both inspirational and interactive (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Salanova et al., 2005). The Kenya Airways evidence therefore reinforces the empirical position that employee engagement improves most when leaders combine vision with dialogue.

An unexpected finding was the strength of employee sentiment regarding consultation in decision-making. Beyond the clarity and timeliness of communication channels, many respondents expressed that executive leaders should not make major organisational decisions without actively involving staff. This was surprising because it challenges the traditional assumption that top management can act unilaterally while merely informing employees afterwards. Instead, the evidence suggests that employees at Kenya Airways view consultation as integral to communication itself, linking inclusion directly to organisational commitment. This nuance extends the literature by showing that in high-stakes service environments, communication effectiveness is judged not only by message delivery but also by the degree of participatory involvement in decision processes.

4.9.3 Trust, brand confidence, and loyalty

The empirical review emphasized that trust and loyalty are built through transparent, consistent, and values-aligned communication. Studies by Qureshi et al. (2022), Walter and Kiefer (2025),

and Muhammad et al. (n.d.) showed that openness, honesty, and two-way dialogue help employees trust the brand and develop emotional attachment and loyalty. The findings from Kenya Airways reflect this pattern. Many respondents agreed that executive communication increases confidence in leadership and strengthens loyalty to the organisation. In addition, trust ratings were concentrated in the mid-to-high range, indicating a generally positive but not very strong level of confidence.

This is highly consistent with the literature, which argues that trust emerges when employees perceive leadership messages as credible and fair. However, the Kenya Airways findings also reveal a large neutral group on items related to pride, belonging, and emotional attachment. This suggests that trust and loyalty are present, but not deeply established across the workforce. The qualitative responses strengthen this conclusion because some employees said that communication is sometimes weak, uncertain, or too controlled. The literature warned that inconsistency and lack of transparency erode trust, and the Kenya Airways data confirm that point. The study therefore supports the empirical review by showing that trust and loyalty depend not just on communication frequency, but on whether employees believe leaders are open, sincere, and responsive (Qureshi et al., 2022; Walter & Kiefer, 2025; Muhammad et al., n.d.).

4.9.4 Communication and organisational culture

The empirical literature also argues that executive communication reinforces organisational culture by promoting shared values, identity, and behavioral standards. Research reviewed under the empirical background showed that leadership messages influence how employees interpret values such as customer focus, discipline, innovation, and accountability. The Kenya Airways findings strongly support this argument. Respondents indicated that executive communication

influences teamwork, trust, belonging, ownership, customer service, safety, and discipline. Customer service and safety emerged as the most influenced cultural dimensions, which is especially important in aviation.

This finding is consistent with the literature's claim that communication is most effective when it reinforces operational and service-related values. It also confirms the view that organisational culture is not maintained by policies alone, but by the repeated communication of expectations and priorities. However, the neutral responses across several items suggest that this influence is uneven. The empirical review emphasized that culture is strengthened when communication is authentic, consistent, and two-way. The Kenya Airways findings show that where these conditions are met, employees experience stronger cultural alignment. Where communication is weak or unclear, culture becomes less visible and less unified. Thus, the study adds practical evidence to the literature by showing that culture at Kenya Airways is influenced less by formal slogans and more by the perceived credibility of leadership communication.

4.9.5 Best practices and improvement needs

The reviewed literature also noted that hybrid communication strategies tend to be the most effective because they combine the reach of digital media with the richness of face-to-face interaction. Studies in the empirical review showed that town halls, email, video updates, and interactive platforms work well when used together. The Kenya Airways findings align with this idea. Town halls, emails, memos, WhatsApp, and feedback sessions were all identified as effective communication practices. This supports the literature's position that multichannel communication improves reach and reinforces the message.

At the same time, the study adds an important nuance. Employees are not mainly asking for more channels; they are asking for better quality communication. They want more regular updates, clearer explanations, stronger follow-up, and more humane and consultative communication. This extends the empirical literature by showing that channel effectiveness depends on leadership behaviour and organisational culture. In other words, a town hall or email only works well if it is perceived as honest, timely, and responsive. The Kenya Airways findings therefore reinforce the literature while emphasizing that communication quality is the decisive factor.

4.9.6 Chapter Summary

The empirical review identified several gaps in the literature, especially the lack of Kenya-specific evidence, limited mixed-methods studies, and insufficient attention to aviation-sector realities. The present study helps address these gaps by examining executive communication within Kenya Airways using both survey and interview responses. This makes the findings particularly relevant because they reflect the realities of a high-pressure service environment where communication affects not only employee attitudes but also customer service, safety, and organisational coordination.

The study also contributes to the literature by showing that executive communication in an African aviation context is shaped by a combination of formal channels, transformational leadership tendencies, and employee expectations for transparency and consultation. Unlike some of the reviewed studies, which focused mainly on general corporate or Western contexts, this study demonstrates that communication in Kenya Airways is strongly influenced by the need for inclusion, clarity, and trust-building in a complex organisational environment. This makes the

findings a useful extension of the empirical literature and provides a basis for further comparative studies in other Kenyan or African service organisations.

In summary, the findings of this study are strongly consistent with the empirical literature reviewed in section 2.4. The literature argued that communication channels influence commitment, communication style shapes engagement, transparency builds trust and loyalty, and leadership communication reinforces culture. The Kenya Airways findings confirm all these relationships. However, the study also shows that these effects are moderated by inconsistency, neutrality, and limited consultation. This means that executive communication is clearly influential, but its full potential at Kenya Airways has not yet been realized. The main lesson from linking the findings to the literature is that communication matters most when it is not only frequent, but also transparent, participatory, and credible.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the study findings, the conclusion drawn from the analysis, recommendations arising from the findings, and suggestions for further study. The study examined the influence of executive communication in shaping organisational culture: a case of Kenya Airways. The discussion is organized around the study objectives, namely: communication strategies used by executive leaders and their influence on organisational commitment, dominant communication styles and their impact on employee engagement,

executive communication and employee trust and loyalty, and the contribution of executive communication to the reinforcement and sustainability of organisational culture.

5.2 Discussion of study findings

5.2.1 Communication strategies used by executive leaders and their influence on employee organisational commitment

The first objective examined the communication strategies used by executive leaders at Kenya Airways PLC and their influence on employee organisational commitment. The findings showed that executive leaders mainly communicate through town halls, emails, memos, digital platforms, and staff meetings. Town halls emerged as the most used communication channel, followed by emails and internal memos. These findings indicate that Kenya Airways PLC has established a range of formal communication channels through which executive leaders communicate organisational information, goals, expectations, and decisions to employees.

Although respondents generally considered these communication channels useful, many remained neutral on whether executive leaders communicate organisational goals clearly, share information promptly, and adequately explain major decisions. This suggests that the availability of communication channels does not necessarily translate into strong employee organisational commitment. The findings imply that the effectiveness of executive communication depends not only on the channel used but also on the clarity, timeliness, completeness, and relevance of the information communicated.

The findings further indicate that employees value regular updates, clear explanations, and follow-up from executive leaders. The presence of neutral responses suggests that some employees may not consistently experience communication as sufficiently open or informative.

This may affect their understanding of organisational priorities and their sense of connection to the organisation. The findings therefore suggest that executive communication can strengthen organisational commitment when employees receive timely and meaningful information and are given opportunities to seek clarification and provide feedback.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that communication strategies at Kenya Airways PLC provide an important foundation for employee organisational commitment. However, greater emphasis on transparency, consultation, feedback, and follow-up could strengthen the extent to which these strategies translate into stronger commitment among employees.

5.2.2 Dominant communication styles used by executive leaders and their impact on employee engagement

The second objective sought to analyse the dominant communication styles employed by executive leaders at Kenya Airways PLC and their impact on employee engagement. The findings revealed that transformational communication was perceived as the most common communication style, followed by transactional communication. Executive leaders were generally perceived as professional, supportive, consistent, approachable, and adaptive in their communication.

These characteristics appear to contribute to employee engagement by helping employees understand the organisation's direction and encouraging them to contribute towards organisational objectives. Transformational communication provides a basis for communicating vision, motivating employees, and connecting individual contributions to broader organisational goals. Transactional communication, on the other hand, provides structure by communicating expectations, responsibilities, performance requirements, and organisational standards.

However, the findings also showed that participative and two-way communication were not strongly experienced by all respondents. A considerable number of employees remained neutral on whether they are genuinely involved in communication and decision-making processes. This suggests that while executive communication may be inspirational and structured, opportunities for employees to participate actively in organisational dialogue may not be consistently experienced across the organisation.

The findings therefore indicate that employee engagement is influenced not only by the style and tone of executive communication but also by the extent to which employees are able to participate in the communication process. More interactive communication, including feedback sessions, employee consultations, and opportunities for dialogue with leadership, could enhance employee involvement and strengthen engagement.

5.2.3 Influence of executive communication strategies on employee trust and loyalty

The third objective assessed the influence of executive communication strategies on employee trust and loyalty within Kenya Airways PLC. The findings indicated that executive communication positively contributes to trust in leadership and employee loyalty, although the influence was not strong across all employees. Many respondents agreed that communication from executive leaders increases their confidence in leadership, emotional attachment to the organisation, and willingness to remain with Kenya Airways PLC.

The trust ratings were generally moderate to high, indicating a reasonable level of confidence in executive communication among respondents. This suggests that consistent communication from executive leaders can contribute to employees' perceptions of leadership credibility and reliability. When leaders communicate organisational developments and decisions clearly and

consistently, employees are better positioned to understand the rationale behind organisational actions, which may support confidence in leadership.

Nevertheless, the relatively large number of neutral responses relating to pride, belonging, and emotional attachment indicates that trust and loyalty are not equally experienced across the workforce. Some respondents also raised concerns about communication that may be weak, uncertain, selective, or overly controlled. Such perceptions can limit the ability of executive communication to build deeper levels of trust and loyalty, particularly where employees expect greater openness and transparency from leadership.

The findings therefore suggest that executive communication is an important factor in developing employee trust and loyalty, but its influence depends on the credibility, consistency, transparency, and openness of the communication process. Communication that acknowledges employee concerns, provides adequate explanations, and allows for feedback may contribute to stronger trust and a greater sense of belonging among employees.

5.2.4 Contribution of executive communication to the reinforcement and sustainability of organisational culture

The fourth objective sought to evaluate how executive communication contributes to the reinforcement and sustainability of organisational culture at Kenya Airways PLC. The findings showed that executive communication influences important cultural dimensions including teamwork, accountability, discipline, customer service, safety, and a shared sense of organisational direction. Customer service and safety emerged as the cultural aspects most strongly influenced by executive communication, which is particularly significant within the aviation sector.

The findings indicate that executive leaders play an important role in reinforcing organisational values and expected employee behaviours through their communication. Regular communication about customer service standards, safety requirements, organisational expectations, and strategic priorities can help employees understand the behaviours and values that the organisation seeks to sustain. Respondents generally agreed that leadership communication contributes to sustaining organisational culture and influences how employees conduct themselves at work.

The qualitative findings further indicated that executive communication can promote organisational pride, employee ownership, belonging, motivation, and innovation. These outcomes suggest that communication from executive leaders extends beyond the transmission of information and can contribute to how employees understand and experience the organisation's culture.

However, some respondents perceived executive communication as unclear, selective, or overly focused on organisational image. Such perceptions may weaken the cultural influence of leadership communication if employees perceive a gap between what leaders communicate and their actual organisational experiences. The findings therefore suggest that the sustainability of organisational culture depends on communication that is credible, consistent, transparent, and aligned with organisational practices.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that executive communication is an important mechanism for reinforcing and sustaining organisational culture at Kenya Airways PLC. Its contribution is strengthened when leaders consistently communicate organisational values, demonstrate alignment between communication and organisational actions, and provide employees with opportunities to participate in organisational dialogue.

5.2.5 Overall discussion of executive communication and organisational culture

Across the four objectives, the findings demonstrate that executive communication is an important organisational process through which leadership communicates strategy, expectations, values, and organisational priorities to employees. The findings also show that the influence of executive communication extends across employee organisational commitment, engagement, trust and loyalty, and the reinforcement and sustainability of organisational culture.

However, the findings consistently point to a distinction between the **presence of communication** and its **perceived effectiveness**. Kenya Airways PLC has established multiple communication channels and employees generally recognise their usefulness. At the same time, neutral responses and qualitative comments indicate a need for greater clarity, timeliness, transparency, consultation, feedback, and follow-up.

The findings therefore suggest that the effectiveness of executive communication is determined not only by the frequency or availability of communication but also by the quality of interaction between executive leaders and employees. Communication that is clear, consistent, transparent, participatory, and responsive is more likely to support the organisational outcomes examined in this study. This reinforces the importance of viewing executive communication as a strategic organisational process rather than simply a means of disseminating information.

5.3 Conclusion

As for Objective 1, which was to examine the communication strategies used by executive leaders at Kenya Airways PLC and their influence on employee organisational commitment. The study concludes that communication strategies such as town halls, emails, memos, and digital platforms are effective only when accompanied by clarity, timeliness, and transparency.

Employees reported that commitment is strengthened when leaders explain the rationale behind major decisions and provide consistent updates. However, inconsistent follow-through and limited consultation reduce the overall impact, indicating that strategies must be institutionalised rather than ad hoc.

With regard to Objective 2, which sought to analyse the dominant communication styles employed by executive leaders at Kenya Airways PLC and their impact on employee engagement, Transformational communication emerged as the dominant style, associated with inspiration, motivation, and a sense of shared purpose. This style positively influenced engagement by providing direction and emotional resonance. Nonetheless, findings revealed that employees still desire more participatory and adaptive communication, suggesting that while transformational styles are effective, they must be complemented with stronger two-way and situational approaches to sustain engagement across diverse employee groups.

As for Objective 3, which sought to assess the influence of executive communication strategies on employee trust and loyalty within the organisation. The study concludes that trust and loyalty are strengthened when executive communication is credible, open, and aligned with organisational values. Employees expressed greater confidence in leadership when communication acknowledged both successes and challenges, particularly during periods of uncertainty. Conversely, neutral responses on pride and belonging highlight that trust is not yet universal, underscoring the need for more consistent transparency and candour to build loyalty across all cadres.

Finally, for Objective 4, which sought to evaluate how executive communication contributes to the reinforcement and sustainability of organisational culture at Kenya Airways PLC, Executive communication was found to reinforce cultural dimensions such as customer service, safety,

teamwork, accountability, and discipline. Leaders who communicated consistently and inclusively helped embed these values into daily practices. However, the influence was uneven, with some employees perceiving communication as fragmented. The study therefore concludes that executive communication should be treated as a strategic leadership function that sustains organisational culture by aligning messages with values and ensuring inclusivity across departments.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

There is a need to improve clarity and consistency of executive communication. The study found that employees often perceive leadership messages as fragmented or overly technical, which undermines trust and alignment. Executive leaders at Kenya Airways should therefore adopt structured communication protocols that ensure organisational goals, major decisions, and ongoing changes are conveyed with clarity and consistency. This can be achieved by: Publishing monthly leadership briefs via the *KQ360* platform that summarise strategic updates in accessible language; providing plain-language summaries alongside technical memos to simplify complex information for non-specialist staff; and embedding a "reason behind the decision" section in all major announcements to strengthen transparency and employee understanding. By institutionalising these practices, executives will reduce ambiguity, foster cultural coherence, and reinforce employee confidence in leadership decisions.

Secondly, there is a need to strengthen two-way communication and employee participation. Findings indicated that while town halls and digital platforms exist, employees—particularly frontline staff—still feel excluded from decision-making processes. Leadership should therefore embed systematic feedback loops that go beyond symbolic gestures. This includes: Scheduling

quarterly feedback forums where employees can raise concerns directly with executives and receive responses in real time, Integrating digital polls and pulse surveys into *KQ360* to capture frontline perspectives continuously, especially during operational changes, Mandating departmental section meetings where managers cascade executive messages and collect employee input for upward reporting and Establishing a formal consultation calendar so employees know when and how their voices will be heard. Such mechanisms will not only enhance engagement but also build a culture of inclusivity, signalling that leadership values employee perspectives in shaping organisational direction.

Thirdly, there needs to be trust built through transparency and candour. The study highlighted that employees value honesty during periods of uncertainty or change. Executive leaders should therefore communicate not only positive developments but also challenges, risks, and the steps being taken to address them. For example, during restructuring or crisis periods, leaders should provide balanced updates that acknowledge difficulties while outlining recovery strategies. This candour will strengthen credibility, reduce rumours, and foster resilience by demonstrating that leadership is willing to confront challenges openly.

Fourthly, humanise communication through empathy and inclusivity. Employees expressed a desire for communication that acknowledges their concerns and makes them feel valued. Leaders should therefore adopt a more respectful and empathetic tone in all communication. This can be achieved by: Incorporating employee recognition segments in town halls and newsletters, Using inclusive language that reflects diversity and collective identity and Training executives in emotional intelligence and empathetic communication practices to ensure messages resonate across different employee groups. Such practices will reinforce the human side of leadership, strengthen morale, and embed a culture of respect and belonging.

Finally, there needs to be coordinated and optimised communication channels. While Kenya Airways already uses emails, memos, and town halls, the study found that their effectiveness is uneven. Leaders should therefore adopt a coordinated multichannel strategy that leverages the strengths of each medium. For instance: Use formal written communication (emails, memos) for policy and compliance updates. Employ face-to-face and town halls for complex or emotionally charged issues requiring dialogue and deploy digital updates via KQ360 and mobile apps for real-time operational changes. By aligning channel choice with message complexity and employee needs, Kenya Airways can maximise reach, reduce misinterpretation, and strengthen cultural alignment.

5.5 Suggestions for further study

Future studies could examine executive communication and organisational culture comparatively across other airlines in Kenya and East Africa. Further research could also investigate the effect of digital communication tools, including WhatsApp, intranet systems, and mobile applications, on employee engagement and trust. Longitudinal research would be useful in examining how executive communication influences employee commitment and loyalty over time. Mixed-method studies could further investigate the relationship between executive communication and customer service performance in the aviation sector. Finally, future research could examine how executive communication during crises and operational disruptions affects employee confidence and organisational culture.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Informed Consent Form

Title of the Project:

"The Influence of Executive Communication in Shaping Organisational Culture: A Case of Kenya Airways"

Goal: The purpose of this study is to analyse Executive Communication's Impact on Organisational Culture: Evidence from Kenya Airways. By investigating how messages from top leaders like CEOs articulate vision, set norms, and build trust, the research addresses a critical gap in understanding cultural dynamics amid KQ's persistent performance challenges, such as labour disputes, financial losses, and low morale.

Participants: This study is completely voluntary, and any member can opt out at any time with no repercussions. There are no financial rewards for participating.

Confidentiality: Participants' identification would never be utilized in this study, and all answers will be handled with utmost discretion.

Name of the Researcher: Charles Kanyingi Position: Student

Signed by the researcher: ……..... Date: …….

Statement to be signed by the participant:

I acknowledge that the investigator has stated the purpose of the work as well as the range of tasks that I will indeed be expected to do. I certify that I have had ample opportunity to inquire about this project. I realize that my involvement is entirely optional, and that I am free to withdraw at any time in the course of the project for any reason. I agree to participate in this project.

Signature: ……. Date: …….…….

Appendix II: Research Questionnaire to employees across selected departments

Title: Questionnaire on Executive Communication and Organisational Outcomes at Kenya Airways PLC

Instructions to respondents:

Please tick or mark the option that best represents your opinion. The information will be used for academic purposes only and will be treated confidentially.

Section A: Background Information

1. Gender: [] Male [] Female
2. Age bracket: [] Below 25 [] 26–35 [] 36–45 [] 46–55 [] Above 55
3. Highest education level: [] Certificate [] Diploma [] Degree [] Postgraduate [] Other
4. Department:
5. Job level: [] Junior staff [] Supervisory [] Middle management [] Senior management
6. Years worked at Kenya Airways: [] Below 1 [] 1–5 [] 6–10 [] Above 10

Section B: Executive Communication Strategies

Tick one option for each statement.

Response scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4	5
7. Executive leaders communicate organisational goals clearly.					
8. Executive leaders share timely information with employees.					
9. Executive leaders use open and transparent communication.					
10. Executive leaders provide feedback on important organisational issues.					
11. Executive communication encourages employee participation.					
12. Executive leaders communicate in a way that is easy to					

understand.					
13. Executive communication uses appropriate channels such as meetings, email, or staff forums.					
14. Executive leaders explain the reasons behind major decisions.					

15. Which communication channel do you receive most executive messages through?

- Email
- Staff meetings
- Internal memos
- Town halls
- Digital platforms
- Other:

Section C: Communication Styles

Tick one option for each statement.

Response scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4	5
16. Executive leaders use a participative communication style.					
17. Executive leaders often issue directives without consultation.					
18. Executive leaders communicate in a supportive and					

respectful manner.					
19. Executive leaders encourage two-way communication.					
20. Executive leaders adapt their communication style to different situations.					
21. Executive leaders communicate with professionalism and consistency.					
22. Executive leaders are approachable when employees need clarification.					
23. Executive communication is usually one-way rather than interactive.					

24. Rank the communication style most commonly used by executive leaders at Kenya Airways.
    - Participative

- Directive
- Transformational
- Transactional
- Laissez-faire

Section D: Employee Organisational Commitment

Tick one option for each statement.

Response scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

25. I feel emotionally attached to Kenya Airways.					
26. I am proud to tell others that I work for Kenya Airways.					
27. I intend to continue working for Kenya Airways for a long time.					
28. I feel a strong sense of belonging to this organisation.					
29. I am willing to put					

in extra effort to help Kenya Airways succeed.					
30. I am committed to the goals of Kenya Airways.					
31. I would recommend Kenya Airways as a good place to work.					
32. Leaving Kenya Airways would be a difficult decision for me.					

Section E: Employee Engagement

Tick one option for each statement.

Response scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

33. I feel motivated to perform my duties well.					
34. I am enthusiastic about my work.					

35. I actively contribute ideas at work.					
36. I feel energized when performing my job.					
37. I am involved in decisions that affect my work.					
38. I feel engaged in the activities of the organisation.					
39. I willingly participate in activities that improve service delivery.					
40. I take initiative when handling work-related matters.					

41. What mainly increases your engagement at work?

- Clear communication from leaders

- Recognition of good performance
- Opportunities for participation
- Supportive supervision
- Career growth opportunities
- Other:

Section F: Trust and Loyalty

Tick one option for each statement.

Response scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

42. I trust executive leaders at Kenya Airways.						
43. Executive leaders act in the best interests of employees.						
44. Executive communication increases my confidence in leadership.						
45. I feel loyal to Kenya						

Airways because of how leaders communicate.						
46. Executive leaders are honest and dependable in communication.						
47. I believe leadership can be relied upon in difficult situations.						
48. Executive communication makes me more willing to support organisational decisions.						
49. I believe executive leaders treat employees fairly.						

50. On a scale of 1 to 10, how much do you trust executive communication at Kenya Airways?

- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Section G: Organisational Culture

Tick one option for each statement.

Response scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

52. Executive communication reflects the values of Kenya Airways.					
53. Leadership communication promotes a positive work culture.					
54. Executive messages reinforce teamwork and collaboration.					
55. Executive communication supports accountability and discipline.					
56. Leadership					

communication helps sustain the organisation's culture.					
57. I understand the core values of Kenya Airways from executive communication.					
58. Executive communication encourages a culture of safety and professionalism.					
59. Leadership communication influences how employees behave at work.					

60. Which cultural aspects are most influenced by executive communication?
    - Teamwork
    - Accountability
    - Discipline
    - Safety

- Customer service
- Innovation
- Other:

Section H: Open-ended Questions

61. In your view, how does executive communication influence the culture of Kenya Airways?

62. What communication practices by executive leaders work best at Kenya Airways?

63. What improvements would you suggest for executive communication at Kenya Airways?

APPENDIX III Semi-Structured Interview Guide with executives (including the CEO and directors)

Title: Interview Guide for Executive Leaders at Kenya Airways PLC

Introduction:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The purpose of this discussion is to understand how executive communication shapes employee commitment, engagement, trust, loyalty, and organisational culture at Kenya Airways PLC. Your responses will remain confidential and will be used for academic purposes only.

Section A: Background Information

1. Position of respondent:
2. Department:
3. Years in leadership:
4. Main responsibilities:

Section B: Communication Strategies

5. How do you usually communicate important organisational issues to employees?
6. What communication channels do you use most often?
7. How do you ensure that employees understand executive messages?
8. What communication challenges do you experience as an executive leader?
9. How do you measure the effectiveness of your communication?

Section C: Communication Styles

10. How would you describe your communication style as a leader?
11. In what situations do you use directive communication?
12. How often do you engage employees in decision-making?

13. How do you balance authority and openness in communication?
14. How do you adapt your communication style across different employee groups?

Section D: Employee Commitment and Engagement

15. In what ways do you think executive communication affects employee commitment?
16. How does leadership communication influence employee motivation and engagement?
17. What kinds of communication practices seem to increase employee involvement?
18. How do you encourage employees to feel part of the organisation?

Section E: Trust and Loyalty

19. How does executive communication help build trust among employees?
20. What communication behaviours' do you believe increase employee loyalty?
21. How do you communicate during periods of uncertainty or change?
22. What role does transparency play in strengthening confidence in leadership?

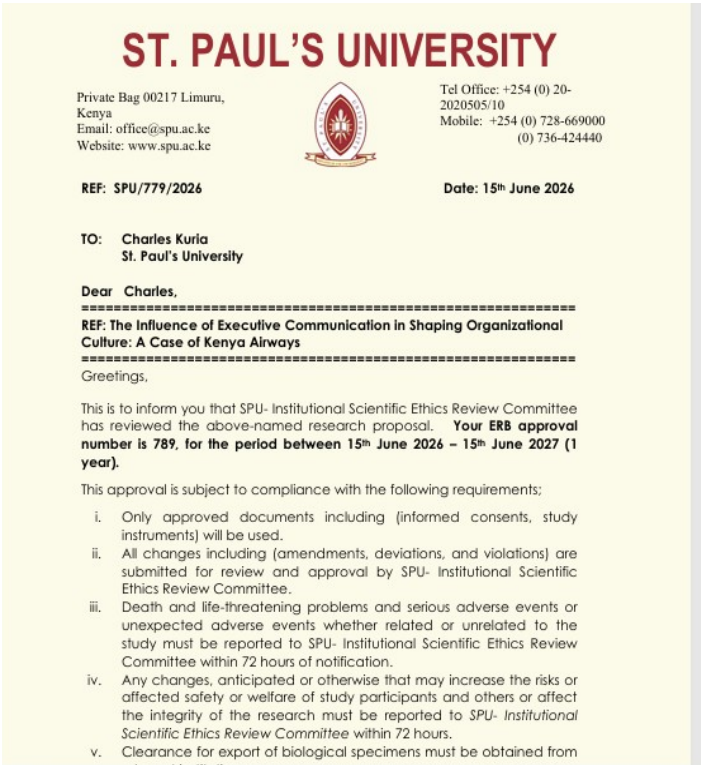
Section F: Organisational Culture

23. How does executive communication reflect or reinforce Kenya Airways' values?
24. What role does leadership communication play in sustaining organisational culture?
25. How do executive messages contribute to teamwork, accountability, and discipline?
26. How do you ensure consistency between organisational values and leadership communication?

Section G: Closing Questions

27. What do you think should be improved in executive communication at Kenya Airways?
28. Is there anything else you would like to add about communication and organisational culture?

Appendix III: ISERC CLEARANCE



ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

Private Bag 00217 Limuru,
Kenya
Email: office@spu.ac.ke
Website: www.spu.ac.ke

Tel Office: +254 (0) 20-2020505/10
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(0) 736-424440

REF: SPU/779/2026 **Date: 15th June 2026**

TO: Charles Kuria
St. Paul's University

Dear Charles,

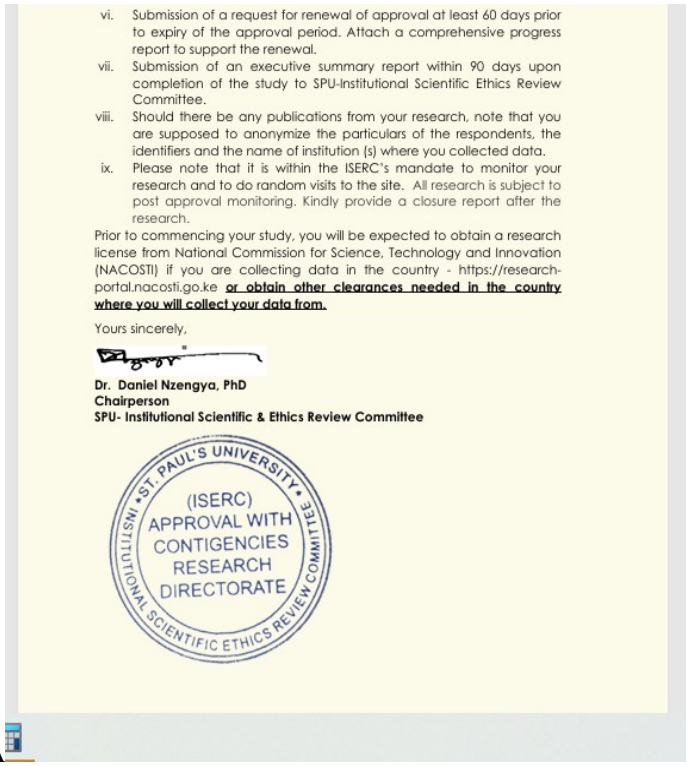
REF: The Influence of Executive Communication in Shaping Organizational Culture: A Case of Kenya Airways

Greetings,

This is to inform you that SPU- Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee has reviewed the above-named research proposal. **Your ERB approval number is 789, for the period between 15th June 2026 – 15th June 2027 (1 year).**

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

i. Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments) will be used.
ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by SPU- Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee.
iii. Death and life-threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to SPU- Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee within 72 hours of notification.
iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affected safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to *SPU- Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee* within 72 hours.
v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from



vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.
vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to SPU-Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee.
viii. Should there be any publications from your research, note that you are supposed to anonymize the particulars of the respondents, the identifiers and the name of institution (s) where you collected data.
ix. Please note that it is within the ISERC's mandate to monitor your research and to do random visits to the site. All research is subject to post approval monitoring. Kindly provide a closure report after the research.

Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) if you are collecting data in the country - https://research-portal.nacosti.go.ke **or obtain other clearances needed in the country where you will collect your data from.**

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Daniel Nzengya, PhD
Chairperson
SPU- Institutional Scientific & Ethics Review Committee

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY
(ISERC)
APPROVAL WITH
CONTIGENCIES
RESEARCH
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INSTITUTIONAL SCIENTIFIC ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

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Appendix IV NACOSTI RESEARCH PERMIT



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