

Strategic Change Management and Organizational Performance: Case Study of Safaricom Public Limited Company

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Abstract

Despite the recognized significance of strategic change management, nearly 70 percent of organizational change initiatives fail to achieve their intended outcomes globally. Safaricom PLC exemplifies this challenge, experiencing declining revenue growth from +12.4 percent in 2021 to +4.3 percent in 2023 and reduced M-Pesa profitability from 18 percent to 9.5 percent. This study investigates the influence of key strategic change management practices on Safaricom PLC's organizational performance. The research examined stakeholder engagement, employee training and development, and business process reengineering as determinants of performance outcomes. The study was anchored in Lewin's Three-Step Model, Kotter's Eight-Step Model, and Prosci's ADKAR framework. A descriptive research design with quantitative analysis was employed, targeting 250 middle-level managers from five Safaricom branches in Nairobi's Central Business District. Through stratified random sampling, 153 respondents completed structured online questionnaires, achieving a 92.8% response rate. Data analysis used SPSS Version 25 for descriptive and inferential statistics including Pearson's correlation and linear regression. Results revealed statistically significant positive relationships between all practices and organizational performance: stakeholder engagement ($r = .331, p < 0.001$), employee training ($r = .257, p < 0.001$), and business process reengineering ($r = .264, p < 0.001$). These practices collectively explained nearly two-thirds of performance variance. The study concludes that strategic change management is indispensable for telecommunications sector performance, recommending investment in structured stakeholder communication, comprehensive training programs, and continuous process innovation culture.

Keywords: *Strategic Change, Organizational Performance, Stakeholder Engagement, Employee Training, Business Process.*

1.0 Introduction

The twenty-first-century business environment is increasingly defined by rapid technological innovation, economic volatility, and unpredictable global events. In such a context, strategic change management has emerged as a critical organizational capability that enables firms to adapt, innovate, and maintain competitiveness. Scholars such as Iyaji et al. (2023) and Wiedeman and Hofmeyr (2020) contend that organizations capable of systematically managing change are better positioned to navigate uncertainty while safeguarding performance. Strategic change management involves preparing personnel, creating enabling processes, and providing continuous monitoring mechanisms to ensure that transitions are implemented effectively (Munawar, 2021). Globally, corporations have embraced change management practices to address challenges ranging from digital transformation to workforce restructuring. For instance, Microsoft's integration of artificial intelligence (AI) within its operations, guided by deliberate change management strategies, resulted in a 40 percent productivity increase (Microsoft, 2024). Within Africa, the adoption of structured change management has supported competitive repositioning, particularly in South Africa, where firms have leveraged leadership restructuring and innovative organizational cultures to sustain operational efficiency (Mogale, 2022).

In Kenya, the telecommunications industry is among the most dynamic sectors of the economy, with Safaricom PLC standing as its leading player. Safaricom's market dominance is rooted in its ability to differentiate products, develop robust market strategies, and invest in technological innovation. Nevertheless, the firm has faced critical performance challenges, including declining revenue growth and reduced returns from its flagship M-Pesa service due to regulatory interventions (Safaricom Annual Report, 2023; Central Bank of Kenya, 2023). These challenges underscore the necessity for renewed and systematic strategic change management initiatives to sustain profitability and competitiveness.

1.1 Problem Statement

Strategic change management has gained widespread recognition as a critical organizational capability, yet implementation consistently falls short of expectations across industries and geographic contexts. Hughes (2022) estimates that nearly 70 percent of organizational change initiatives fail to achieve their intended outcomes, highlighting persistent gaps between strategic

design and execution. These implementation failures carry significant organizational consequences, frequently resulting in financial losses, diminished employee morale, and weakened competitive positioning that can threaten long-term sustainability.

The Kenyan telecommunications sector exemplifies these challenges, with Safaricom PLC serving as a prominent case study of change management complexities. Although the company has historically implemented various change management practices, including formal communication channels designed to enhance worker acceptance of new initiatives, its recent performance trajectory reveals concerning vulnerabilities (Ahmed & Oluoch, 2023). The company's financial indicators demonstrate this decline, with revenue growth dropping significantly from +12.4 percent in 2021 to +4.3 percent in 2023, representing an 8.1 percent reduction in growth rate (Safaricom Annual Report, 2023). This downward trend extends to core service offerings, as profitability from M-Pesa transactions decreased from 18 percent in 2021 to 9.5 percent in 2023, largely attributable to regulatory interventions and pricing caps imposed by the Central Bank of Kenya (2023).

These performance declines extend beyond immediate financial implications, potentially affecting Safaricom's customer perception, brand loyalty, and market positioning within Kenya's competitive telecommunications landscape. The situation becomes more concerning when considered alongside existing research limitations in the field. Current literature on change management, both within Kenya and internationally, predominantly focuses on isolated practices such as leadership style or strategic planning, without examining how integrated combinations of key practices influence organizational outcomes (Huma et al., 2023; Okeyo & Nyaera, 2020). Despite Safaricom's pivotal role in Kenya's telecommunications industry and its significance as a regional market leader, limited empirical evidence exists regarding how integrated strategic change management practices particularly stakeholder engagement, employee training, and business process reengineering collectively affect the company's organizational performance.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine the influence of strategic change management on the organizational performance of Safaricom PLC.

1.3 Research Questions

What is the overall impact of strategic change management on Safaricom PLC's performance?

2.0 Literature Review

The literature on strategic change management demonstrates a growing recognition of its role in enhancing organizational performance within volatile and dynamic environments. This comprehensive review synthesizes both theoretical foundations and empirical contributions, providing a critical examination of three key practices: stakeholder engagement, employee training and development, and business process reengineering. The review begins by exploring the theoretical frameworks that underpin change management research, followed by an analysis of empirical evidence from global and regional contexts. Finally, the section identifies conceptual and contextual gaps that justify this study's focus on Safaricom PLC's integrated approach to strategic change management.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Strategic change management theory has evolved through multiple paradigms, with several foundational models providing complementary perspectives on organizational transformation processes. These theoretical frameworks offer distinct but interconnected approaches to understanding how organizations navigate complex change initiatives while maintaining performance standards. The following analysis examines three seminal models that collectively inform contemporary change management practice and provide the conceptual foundation for this study.

2.1.1 Lewin's Three-Step Model

Kurt Lewin's (1951) Three-Step Model established the foundational understanding of organizational change as a systematic process requiring deliberate intervention at multiple stages. The model conceptualizes change through three sequential phases: unfreezing existing organizational states, implementing new processes or structures during the changing phase, and refreezing to embed new practices into organizational culture. During the unfreezing stage, organizations must create awareness of change necessity while simultaneously reducing resistance through strategic communication and stakeholder engagement (Yli-Kerttula & Varis, 2023). This

initial phase proves critical as it establishes the psychological and structural conditions necessary for successful transformation.

The changing phase represents the active implementation period where new processes, technologies, or organizational structures are introduced and operationalized throughout the organization. Subsequently, the refreezing stage focuses on institutionalizing changes by embedding them into organizational culture, ensuring long-term sustainability and preventing regression to previous practices (Basthoni & Sunandar, 2023). The model's enduring relevance stems from its emphasis on the psychological dimensions of change, particularly the importance of stakeholder engagement and communication in overcoming resistance and building commitment to new organizational directions.

However, contemporary scholars have identified significant limitations in Lewin's linear conceptualization of organizational change. Critics argue that the model oversimplifies complex organizational realities by assuming change follows predictable, sequential stages, whereas modern organizational environments often require iterative, adaptive approaches that accommodate uncertainty and emergent challenges (Bekmukhambetova, 2021). Despite these theoretical limitations, Lewin's framework continues to provide valuable insights for understanding Safaricom's efforts to address performance challenges through structured change initiatives.

2.1.2 Kotter's Eight-Step Model

John Kotter (1996) expanded upon Lewin's foundational work by developing a more detailed eight-step process that addresses specific implementation challenges observed in organizational change initiatives. Kotter's model encompasses creating urgency for change, building guiding coalitions, developing and communicating compelling visions, empowering broad-based action, generating short-term wins, consolidating gains, and ultimately institutionalizing new approaches within organizational culture. This framework explicitly recognizes the critical role of leadership and sustained communication in maintaining momentum throughout extended change processes (Carreno, 2024).

The model's comprehensive approach proves particularly relevant to the Kenyan telecommunications sector, where organizations like Safaricom must navigate dynamic competitive landscapes, evolving regulatory frameworks, and rapidly changing consumer expectations. Kotter's emphasis on coalition building and vision communication provides structured guidance for mobilizing diverse stakeholders and sustaining commitment to strategic change initiatives across multiple organizational levels. The framework's attention to generating early wins addresses the psychological need for visible progress, which can maintain motivation and support during lengthy transformation processes.

Nevertheless, contemporary research has highlighted potential limitations in Kotter's sequential approach to change management. Scholars observe that the model's linear progression may not adequately accommodate the non-linear, complex realities of modern organizational environments where multiple changes occur simultaneously and require adaptive, flexible responses (Mouazen et al., 2023). This critique suggests that while Kotter's framework provides valuable structural guidance, organizations may need to adapt its application to fit their specific contextual requirements and change complexities.

2.1.3 Prosci's ADKAR Model

Jeff Hiatt's ADKAR model, developed in 2006, shifted change management focus toward individual-level transformation by emphasizing personal change as the foundation for organizational success. The model's acronym represents five essential elements: Awareness of the need for change, Desire to participate and support change, Knowledge of how to change, Ability to implement required skills and behaviors, and Reinforcement to sustain change over time (Mengsha, 2023). This individual-centric approach recognizes that organizational transformation ultimately depends on individual employees successfully navigating their personal change journeys.

The ADKAR framework's strength lies in its practical approach to addressing employee concerns and resistance during change initiatives. By systematically addressing individual awareness, motivation, capability, and reinforcement needs, organizations can develop targeted interventions that support successful change adoption at the personal level (Arbaein et al., 2024). This approach

proves particularly valuable for complex technological or process changes where employee competence and commitment directly impact implementation success.

However, critics note that ADKAR's individual focus may inadvertently overlook broader structural, political, and systemic barriers that can impede organizational change regardless of individual readiness (Hanif, 2023). The model's emphasis on personal transformation, while valuable, may insufficiently address power dynamics, resource constraints, or cultural resistance that operate at organizational or environmental levels. Despite these limitations, ADKAR's human-centered approach effectively complements Lewin's process focus and Kotter's leadership emphasis, providing a comprehensive theoretical foundation for understanding change management's individual, process, and organizational dimensions in the context of Safaricom's workforce adaptation challenges.

2.2 Empirical Literature Review

Stakeholder engagement has emerged as a fundamental driver of organizational performance, with extensive empirical evidence demonstrating its critical role in facilitating successful change initiatives. Research consistently shows that effective stakeholder engagement, characterized by transparent communication, meaningful involvement in decision-making processes, and sustained leadership support, directly influences organizational outcomes through enhanced employee commitment and reduced resistance to change. Lin et al. (2021) demonstrated that stakeholder engagement fosters deep emotional commitment to organizational goals, while Hongal and Kinange (2020) established that engaged employees consistently exert additional discretionary effort, resulting in measurable productivity improvements. Within the African organizational context, Heslina and Syahrani (2021) found that stakeholder involvement in change processes significantly increased acceptance rates and reduced implementation resistance, though Hasan et al. (2021) cautioned that disengaged stakeholders often become sources of active resistance that can undermine performance outcomes. The leadership dimension proves particularly crucial, as Anwar and Abdullah (2021) observed that leaders who demonstrate visible commitment to change initiatives foster organizational trust and reduce resistance, while Amjad et al. (2020) highlighted transformational leadership's specific role in motivating employees during challenging transition periods.

Employee training and development represents another critical empirical domain, with substantial research evidence supporting its positive impact on organizational performance during change initiatives. Contemporary studies demonstrate that comprehensive training programs integrating diverse learning methodologies—including workshops, e-learning platforms, and on-the-job coaching—significantly improve change adoption rates and employee adaptability (Arulsamy et al., 2023). Kim et al. (2020) established that systematic training enhances employees' capacity to provide change-related guidance and advice, thereby facilitating knowledge diffusion throughout organizations and creating multiplicative learning effects. Mehner et al. (2023) confirmed training's positive influence on both employee motivation and performance outcomes, while Gutiérrez-Iñiguez et al. (2023) emphasized management's crucial role in providing adequate resources and support structures to reinforce learning initiatives. The motivational aspects of training prove equally important, as Cherif (2020) demonstrated that career development opportunities embedded within training programs serve as powerful motivational tools, with promotion pathways linked to training completion significantly enhancing both employee satisfaction and performance metrics.

Business Process Reengineering (BPR) constitutes the third major empirical domain, with growing evidence supporting its contribution to organizational performance through radical workflow redesigns that enhance operational efficiency and competitive positioning. Kiptum (2023) defined BPR as involving fundamental redesigns of core business processes, while empirical research demonstrates its performance benefits through multiple mechanisms including innovation facilitation, decision-making improvement, and strategic technology leveraging. Dimitrova (2023) reported that innovative thinking capabilities developed through BPR initiatives enhanced organizational learning and change adoption in small and medium enterprises, while Huynh et al. (2024) confirmed innovation's broader role in strengthening overall organizational performance across multiple sectors. Thompson and Parent (2020) found that well-managed radical transformation positively influences both internal employee perceptions and external stakeholder confidence, with Chummun (2023) specifically demonstrating that employee involvement in radical change processes improved both communication effectiveness and productivity outcomes. The technological dimensions of BPR prove particularly relevant for telecommunications organizations, as Kowo et al. (2021) demonstrated that process innovation in Nigerian firms

generated significant performance improvements, while Lakhwani et al. (2020) established that technology adoption enhanced productivity in Malaysian companies, highlighting BPR's critical importance for organizations operating in technologically intensive industries where efficiency and innovation determine competitive advantage.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The section present the conceptual framework table that shows the relationship between the independent and dependent variables as shown in Figure 1.

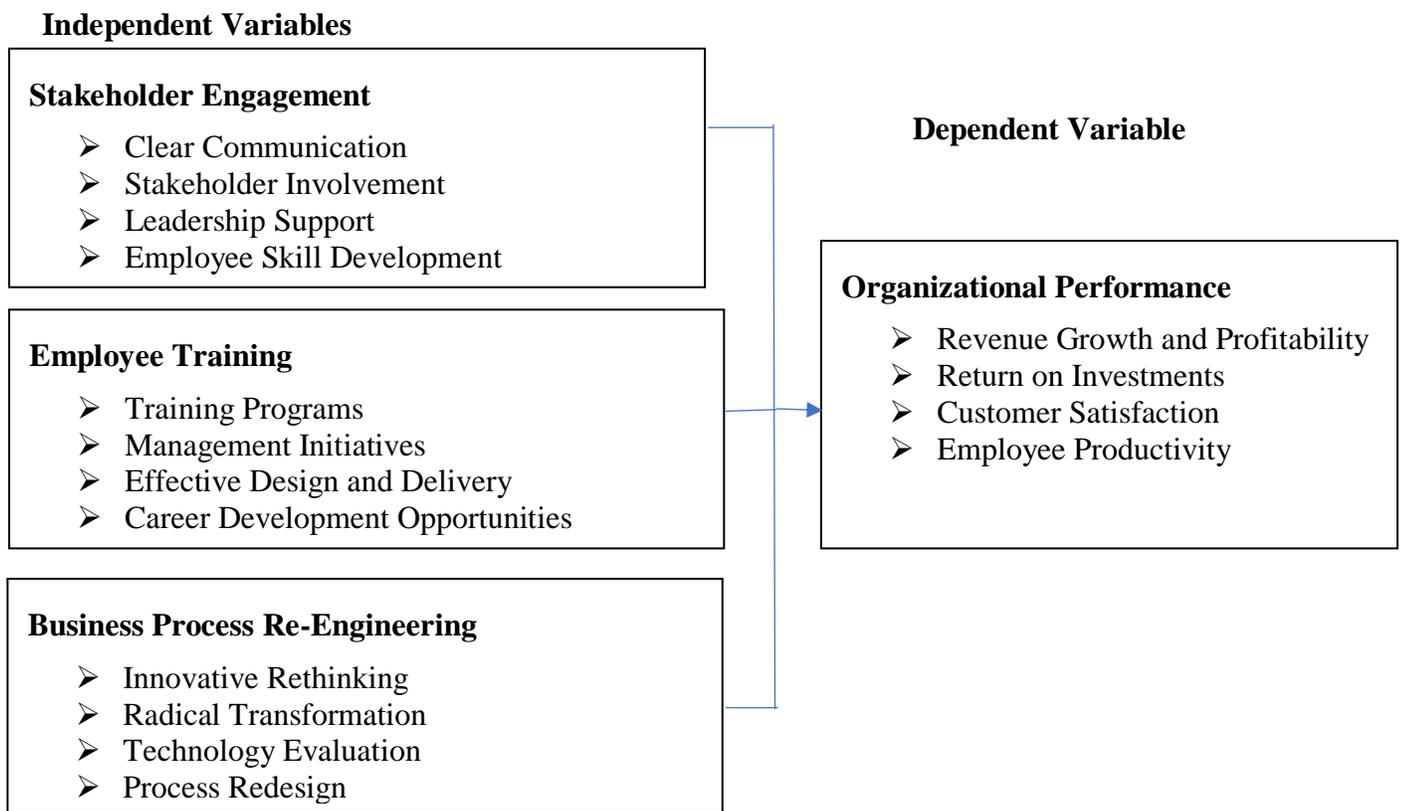


Figure :1 Conceptual Framework

3.0 Research Methodology

This study employed a descriptive research design with quantitative analysis to examine the influence of strategic change management practices on Safaricom's organizational performance (Siedlecki, 2020). The target population comprised 250 middle-level managers from five Safaricom PLC branches in Nairobi's Central Business District, selected for their direct

involvement in change implementation and knowledge of performance metrics. Using stratified random sampling across departments and Yamane's (1967) formula, 153 respondents were selected to ensure representativeness and balance precision with feasibility (Dehalwar & Sharma, 2024). Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires with closed-ended and Likert-scale questions covering stakeholder engagement, employee training, business process reengineering, and organizational performance, distributed electronically to enhance accessibility. A pilot test with 15 respondents validated instrument clarity and reliability, while confidentiality assurances minimized social desirability bias. Data analysis used SPSS for descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, standard deviations) and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation and regression analysis) to examine relationships between change management practices and performance indicators.

4.0 Results

Out of 153 questionnaires distributed, 142 were completed and returned, representing a response rate of 92.8 percent. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2019), a response rate above 70 percent is sufficient for social science research. Thus, the high response rate enhanced the reliability and generalizability of the findings.

4.1 Stakeholder Engagement and Organizational Performance

Descriptive findings indicated that a majority of respondents agreed that stakeholder engagement was a critical determinant of organizational success at Safaricom PLC. Specifically, 78 percent agreed that transparent communication during change initiatives minimized resistance and improved acceptance. Additionally, 72 percent of respondents indicated that involvement in decision-making enhanced their sense of ownership, which in turn motivated greater effort toward organizational goals. Correlation analysis established a strong positive relationship between stakeholder engagement and organizational performance ($r = 0.731, p < 0.01$). Regression analysis further revealed that stakeholder engagement explained 43.5 percent of the variance in performance indicators such as revenue growth, customer satisfaction, and employee productivity. These findings affirm that inclusive and transparent engagement strategies enhance organizational performance outcomes.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Stakeholder Engagement

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.
The management informs employees about intended changes in good time	153	4	5	4.58	2.05
The heads of departments are effective in explaining the proposed changes to employees	153	2	5	3.45	3.78
The heads of departments are effective in listening to the concerns of employees during change	153	3	5	3.89	2.81
The company regularly distributes surveys asking employees about the clarity of the communicated proposed changes	153	4	5	4.65	2.12
The company provides all the necessary information and materials needed to accomplish tasks during change implementation	153	3	4	3.25	3.58
The company organizes workshops and open forums to engage employees regarding the benefits of the proposed changes	153	4	5	4.62	2.07
The company incorporates the employees' views and opinions during change management to ensure widespread acceptance	153	4	5	4.79	2.11
The company experiences higher returns on investment after engaging in effective stakeholder engagement	153	3	5	3.86	3.42
The sales volumes increase when the company is implementing new products in the market	153	4	5	4.25	2.08
The company's communication methods have a positive impact on employee productivity	153	4	5	4.18	2.01

4.2 Employee Training and Development

The study further assessed the role of employee training and development in Safaricom's organizational performance. Descriptive results showed that 81 percent of respondents strongly agreed that training programs enhanced their knowledge and skills, enabling them to adapt to new technologies and processes. Moreover, 74 percent affirmed that career development opportunities linked to training improved motivation and job satisfaction. Correlation analysis indicated a significant positive relationship between training and organizational performance ($r = 0.689$, $p < 0.01$). Regression analysis demonstrated that employee training accounted for 39.7 percent of the variance in performance outcomes. Notably, training was particularly influential in enhancing employee productivity, as reflected in Safaricom's ability to maintain service efficiency despite increasing market demands.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Employee Training and Development

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
The company provides regular training programs to educate employees regarding proposed technological and product changes	153	3	5	3.46	2.68
The company provides training programs to educate customers regarding new products in the market	153	4	5	4.23	2.03
The training modules on how to operate the new telecommunication technologies offered by the company are simple and easy to understand for the employees	153	2	5	3.05	3.56
The management provides resources and personnel to ensure effective training and development of employees during change implementation	153	4	5	4.25	2.01
The top management officers participate in training programs to provide support and boost employee morale during change	153	1	5	3.46	3.89
The training programs are designed to promote easy understanding and acceptance of the proposed changes	153	4	5	4.52	2.02
The company allocates adequate time during training and development initiatives to ensure employees understand the proposed changes and their benefits	153	2	5	3.21	3.97
The company experiences higher returns on investment after engaging in effective training and development of employees and customers	153	3	5	3.24	3.75
The volume of sales increases after effective employee and customer training and development initiatives on new products	153	3	5	3.59	2.21
The company's revenue and profitability increase whenever effective training and development are done on the company's new products in the market	153	4	5	4.28	2.05

4.3 Business Process Reengineering

Regarding business process reengineering (BPR), 70 percent of respondents agreed that Safaricom's efforts to redesign processes improved efficiency and reduced operational redundancies. Another 68 percent indicated that technological innovation through BPR initiatives enhanced customer experience, particularly in mobile banking services. Correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between BPR and organizational performance ($r = 0.702$, $p < 0.01$). Regression analysis showed that BPR explained 41.2 percent of performance variance. BPR initiatives such as automation of customer service functions and integration of digital platforms were identified as critical drivers of revenue growth and customer retention.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Business Process Reengineering

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
Safaricom PLC encourages a culture of innovative rethinking of operations and processes in each department	153	3	5	3.34	3.65
The heads of department accommodate new ideas to improve operations in the company	153	2	5	3.05	3.90
The management engages in regular assessment of business processes and implementation of new systems to improve operations	153	3	4	3.24	3.98
The company experiences rapid growth in sales after implementing new operational and systemic ideas	153	4	5	4.25	2.08
The employees have the freedom to suggest new inventions and innovations in M-Pesa and M-Shwari products	153	3	5	3.76	3.16
The company records an increase in the number of customers after improving previously problematic services and products	153	4	5	4.26	2.13
The number of positive customer reviews on social media about the company increases after process redesign occurs on technologies and systems to benefit clients	153	3	5	3.67	3.87
The company has a culture of periodic implementation of new technologies for competitive advantage	153	4	5	4.34	2.02
The company experiences higher returns on investment, revenue growth, and profitability whenever new mobile or M-Pesa technologies are introduced in the market	153	3	5	3.54	3.68
The company consults employees and other stakeholders within the company before introducing a new technology in the market	153	4	5	4.11	2.56

4.4 Hypothesis Testing

Pearson correlation analysis revealed statistically significant positive relationships between all three strategic change management practices and organizational performance at Safaricom PLC. Stakeholder engagement demonstrated a significant positive correlation with organizational performance ($r = .331, p = .001$), with regression analysis showing a significant model ($F = 14.375, p < .001$) and R^2 of 0.52, indicating that 52% of the variance in organizational performance is explained by stakeholder engagement, while the unstandardized coefficient ($B = 0.65, p < .001$) revealed that each unit increase in stakeholder engagement results in a 0.65 unit increase in organizational performance, thereby supporting H1. Employee training and development showed a significant positive correlation with organizational performance ($r = .257, p = .001$), with the regression model proving significant ($F = 18.13, p < .001$) and an R^2 of 0.672, while the unstandardized coefficient ($B = 1.51, p < .001$) indicated a strong positive impact, confirming H2. Business process reengineering exhibited a significant positive correlation with organizational

performance ($r = .264$, $p = .001$), with a significant regression model ($F = 18.441$, $p < .001$) and the highest unstandardized coefficient ($B = 3.345$, $p < .001$) among the three practices, demonstrating BPR's strongest unit impact on performance and supporting H3. An overwhelming majority of respondents (81.70%) believed that Safaricom's financial performance had increased due to strategic change management initiatives over the past five years, with "Advanced Training Programs" (35.95%) and "Management Improvement" (29.41%) identified as top priorities for future initiatives, while collectively, these three practices accounted for nearly two-thirds of the variance in organizational performance, reinforcing the critical importance of integrated change management strategies in sustaining competitive advantage.

5.0 Conclusion

This study concludes that strategic change management is indispensable for enhancing organizational performance in the dynamic telecommunications sector. For Safaricom PLC, the deliberate application of stakeholder engagement, employee training and development, and business process reengineering has a significant and positive effect on its performance outcomes. The empirical evidence demonstrates that these three practices collectively account for nearly two-thirds of the variance in organizational performance, with stakeholder engagement emerging as the most influential factor in driving change success. The research contributes to change management theory by providing empirical validation of established models (Lewin, Kotter, ADKAR) within a specific, real-world context, moving beyond theoretical discourse to quantify the impact of these practices and strengthening the evidence base for their importance. Furthermore, the study presents a holistic framework that integrates multiple practices, offering a more comprehensive model for understanding strategic change management than studying isolated factors. The company's ability to maintain its market leadership is therefore contingent upon its continued and improved investment in these critical strategic change management practices, particularly as the telecommunications industry continues to face technological disruption, regulatory changes, and intensified competition.

6.0 Recommendations

Based on the research findings, several actionable recommendations emerge for different stakeholder groups. For Safaricom and other telecommunication companies, management should

institutionalize robust stakeholder engagement strategies that prioritize transparent, two-way communication and active stakeholder involvement in decision-making processes, while training programs should be continuously evaluated and redesigned for clarity and effectiveness with a specific focus on linking them to career development opportunities. Additionally, organizations should foster a culture of business process reengineering by encouraging innovative ideas from all organizational levels and aggressively leveraging technology to enhance operational efficiency and competitive advantage. For policymakers, regulatory bodies like the Communications Authority of Kenya should develop comprehensive policies that encourage innovation and investment in human capital development, creating an enabling environment for organizations to undertake necessary strategic changes while maintaining regulatory compliance. Future research should address this study's limitations, particularly its focus on mid-level managers in one company within a single industry and country, by expanding the scope to include senior management, frontline employees, and external stakeholders, conducting longitudinal studies to assess long-term effects of strategic change management initiatives on performance, applying the same model in comparative studies across multiple telecommunications companies in East Africa, and investigating the impact of strategic change management in other critical sectors of the Kenyan economy such as banking or healthcare. Despite these limitations, this study unequivocally demonstrates that a strategic, integrated approach to change management serves as a powerful catalyst for achieving sustained organizational performance and competitive advantage in dynamic business environments.

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