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Exploring the Interplay of Sequential Ambidexterity, Dynamic Capabilities and Performance amongst Chartered Private Universities in Kenya

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Abstract

Higher education institutions worldwide face increasing pressure to balance innovation with operational efficiency to remain competitive in dynamic environments. This study examines the effect of Sequential Ambidexterity (SEQ) on the performance of chartered private universities in Kenya and assesses the moderating role of Dynamic Capabilities (DC) in this relationship. Using a cross-sectional survey design, the study collected primary data from 195 senior academic and administrative managers purposively selected across 27 chartered private universities in Kenya. Data was analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The results show that SEQ has a positive and significant relationship with the perceived performance of Kenyan private universities ($\beta = 0.422$, $p < 0.001$), while DC also has a positive and significant effect ($\beta = 0.387$, $p < 0.001$). In addition, DC significantly moderates the relationship between SEQ and performance ($\beta = 0.085$, $p = 0.026$), indicating an enhancing moderating effect. The model demonstrates substantial explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.49$), while the interaction effect shows a small effect size ($f^2 = 0.021$). It is concluded that SEQ is positively associated with the perceived performance of private universities in Kenya, and this relationship is strengthened in institutions with higher levels of DC. This suggests that universities can derive greater benefits from SEQ by leveraging their DC. Therefore, chartered private universities in Kenya should emphasise the development of SEQ practices alongside strengthening DC across all institutional processes. Future studies should employ longitudinal designs and incorporate objective, multi-source data.

Key terms: Dynamic capability, performance, PLS-SEM, sequential ambidexterity.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

As demand for tertiary education expands, universities are increasingly expected to drive innovation, economic development, and societal progress (Bista, 2026), placing growing pressure on them to improve performance and adapt to changing environmental demands. These expectations align with global development frameworks such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to quality education, innovation, and economic growth (Filho et al., 2024; Marwala, 2025). In this context, universities operate in increasingly dynamic and competitive environments characterised by shifting stakeholder expectations, resource constraints, and heightened accountability pressures.

Within this global discourse, the central strategic challenge for universities is how to simultaneously pursue innovation while maintaining operational efficiency. Organisational strategy theory addresses this challenge through the concept of ambidexterity, which emphasises balancing exploration (innovation and experimentation) and exploitation (efficiency and refinement). Sequential Ambidexterity (SEQ), in particular, provides a temporal approach in which organisations alternate between exploration and exploitation over time, allowing them to adapt their strategic focus in response to environmental changes without requiring structurally separate units (He & Wong, 2004). This makes SEQ particularly relevant for higher education institutions seeking flexibility in resource-constrained and uncertain environments.

The effectiveness of Sequential Ambidexterity, however, depends on the organisation's underlying capabilities. From a Resource-Based View (RBV) and Dynamic Capabilities (DC) perspective, performance advantages arise not only from possessing valuable resources but also from the ability to continuously reconfigure them in response to environmental change. Dynamic Capabilities, therefore, extend RBV by explaining how organisations integrate, build, and reconfigure resources through sensing, seizing, and transforming processes (Teece, 2007; Cyfert et al., 2021). In this integrated view, SEQ provides the strategic logic for alternating between exploration and exploitation, while DC provides the enabling mechanisms that allow such strategic shifts to be effectively implemented.

Despite increasing scholarly attention to sequential ambidexterity and dynamic capabilities, their intersection remains underexplored in higher education, particularly within African contexts. Existing studies have largely examined either ambidexterity–performance relationships in universities (Forte, Silva & Neto, 2024) or dynamic capabilities as independent drivers of institutional adaptation (da Silva et al., 2025), with limited focus on their combined effects. Moreover, empirical investigations of Sequential Ambidexterity in higher education remain scarce (Thomas, 2023), and evidence on how dynamic capabilities moderate performance relationships in service-oriented sectors remains limited.

In the Kenyan context, chartered private universities have experienced substantial expansion, currently numbering 30 chartered institutions under the Commission for University Education (CUE). Despite this growth, concerns persist about their performance relative to public universities, particularly in research output, financial sustainability, and graduate employability. These challenges are linked to funding constraints, intense competition for students and staff, and increasing regulatory demands (Nyongesa, 2022). This suggests a persistent performance gap and underscores the need to understand how strategic capabilities such as SEQ and DC can enhance institutional effectiveness in higher education.

In response to these gaps, this study addresses the following research questions: (1) What is the relationship between Sequential Ambidexterity and perceived organisational performance among chartered private universities in Kenya? (2) Do dynamic capabilities moderate this relationship? Accordingly, the study examines how SEQ influences firm performance and whether DC enhances this relationship. By integrating ambidexterity theory with the Dynamic Capabilities and Resource-Based View perspectives, the study posits that SEQ provides the strategic orientation for balancing exploration and exploitation, while DC enables the effective execution of these strategic shifts through organisational reconfiguration.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. The next section reviews the theoretical and empirical literature on SEQ, DC, and organisational performance, leading to the development of the conceptual framework and hypotheses. The methodology section presents the research design, sampling procedures, measurement of variables, and data analysis techniques. The results section follows, presenting the empirical findings, which are then discussed in relation to existing theory and contextual evidence. The paper concludes with implications, limitations, and directions for future research.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

This study integrates the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Dynamic Capabilities Theory into a unified explanatory framework to explain variations in perceived organisational performance. From an RBV perspective, universities achieve performance advantages through valuable, rare, and inimitable resources such as knowledge assets, skilled personnel, and organisational structures. However, RBV alone is limited in explaining how these resources are renewed in dynamic environments. Dynamic Capabilities Theory extends RBV by explaining how organisations integrate, build, and reconfigure resources through sensing, seizing, and transforming capabilities. In this integrated framework, RBV provides the foundation of strategic resources, while dynamic capabilities explain the processes through which these resources are adapted and redeployed over time. Sequential ambidexterity further complements this integration by describing how organisations balance exploration and exploitation to optimise resource use. Together, these perspectives form a single explanatory logic in which performance is determined not only by resource endowment but also by the capability to continuously realign and reconfigure those resources in response to environmental change.

Hypothesis Development

Sequential Ambidexterity and Organisational Performance

Organisations operating in dynamic environments face a fundamental tension between exploring new opportunities for long-term innovation and exploiting existing capabilities for short-term efficiency. To manage these conflicting demands, contemporary scholarship distinguishes sequential ambidexterity (SEQ) from structural and contextual forms (Frogeri et al., 2022). While structural ambidexterity relies on spatial separation through dedicated organisational units, and contextual ambidexterity relies on individuals dividing their time within a single unit (Hill, 2023; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2013), sequential ambidexterity operates via a successive logic of temporal separation (Nölleke-Przybylski et al., 2019; Sun et al., 2023).

Under this sequential framework, the entire institution systematically shifts its strategic focus from periods of innovation-driven exploration to phases of efficiency-oriented exploitation over time (Frogeri et al.,

2022). This temporal rotation is particularly salient for institutional performance in environments where resource constraints make maintaining separate structures or relying purely on individual employee discretion impractical.

From a theoretical perspective, SEQ is grounded in organisational learning theory and the dynamic adaptation logic of strategy, where organisations accumulate experience and adjust their strategic orientation over time in response to environmental changes (Clark, 2021). Sequential Ambidexterity, therefore, represents a temporal cycling process in which organisations alternate between exploration and exploitation, thereby aligning structures, resources, and routines with shifting environmental demands (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008). This perspective aligns with Dynamic Capabilities Theory, which emphasises organisations' ability to reconfigure internal resources in response to environmental change (Teece, 2020).

Empirical evidence at the global level suggests that SEQ contributes positively to organisational performance by enabling firms to sustain innovation while maintaining operational efficiency. For instance, Peng et al. (2022) find that firms that strategically alternate between exploration and exploitation achieve superior long-term competitiveness, while Gavetti and Levinthal (2000) highlight the role of experiential learning in improving strategic adjustment and performance outcomes. However, this evidence is largely derived from corporate and manufacturing contexts, limiting its generalizability to service-intensive and knowledge-based institutions such as universities.

In higher education settings, SEQ is reflected in cycles of academic innovation and institutional consolidation, such as introducing new academic programs or technologies (exploration), followed by refinement of teaching processes and administrative systems (exploitation). Studies suggest that institutions that effectively manage these cycles are better able to respond to changes in student demand, technological advancement, and regulatory frameworks, thereby improving institutional performance (Thomas et al., 2023; Duncan, 1976). Nevertheless, most of this evidence remains conceptual or derived from developed economies.

In the African context, universities operate under resource constraints, policy volatility, and heightened competition, which may influence the effectiveness of ambidextrous strategies (Ndirangu & Kiiru, 2024). In Kenya specifically, private universities face persistent performance pressures, including financial sustainability challenges, declining enrollment in some institutions, and increased competition from public universities and alternative providers. Despite this, empirical studies examining how Sequential Ambidexterity influences performance in Kenyan private universities remain scarce. Existing literature tends to focus on general institutional performance or broader strategic capabilities, without isolating the temporal dynamics of ambidexterity.

This reveals a clear theoretical and empirical gap: while SEQ is theorised to enhance performance through dynamic strategic cycling, its effect in resource-constrained higher education systems, particularly in African private universities, remains underexplored and insufficiently tested. This study addresses this gap by examining whether Sequential Ambidexterity significantly influences the performance of chartered private universities in Kenya. Accordingly, the study hypothesises that:

H1*: Sequential Ambidexterity has a significant positive influence on the performance of chartered private universities in Kenya.*

The Moderating Role of Dynamic Capabilities

Dynamic Capabilities (DC) have emerged as a critical strategic mechanism through which organisations adapt to environmental change and sustain competitive advantage. Rooted in the Dynamic Capabilities Theory, DC refer to an organisation's ability to sense opportunities and threats, seize emerging opportunities, and transform or reconfigure resources and routines in response to changing conditions (Teece, 2020). While Dynamic Capabilities have been widely examined as a direct determinant of organisational performance, recent scholarship suggests that their value may extend beyond direct effects by strengthening the effectiveness of other strategic orientations and capabilities.

The moderating role of DC is grounded in the recognition that strategic intentions do not automatically translate into superior performance outcomes. Rather, the realisation of performance benefits depends on an organisation's ability to effectively implement and adapt strategic initiatives (Al Issa, 2022). Sequential Ambidexterity requires organisations to periodically shift between exploration and exploitation activities, a process that can be complex, resource-intensive, and potentially disruptive. Dynamic Capabilities provide the mechanisms through which organisations identify the need for such shifts, mobilise resources to support them, and realign structures and processes to ensure successful implementation.

The moderation logic is particularly compelling because the effectiveness of SEQ depends not only on the decision to alternate between exploration and exploitation but also on the organisation's capacity to manage the transitions involved. Organisations with strong sensing capabilities are better able to detect environmental signals indicating when strategic shifts are necessary. Those with effective seizing capabilities can allocate resources to emerging opportunities while maintaining ongoing operations, whereas transforming capabilities enable the reconfiguration of structures, routines, and competencies to support new strategic priorities (Marin et al., 2025). Consequently, organisations possessing stronger Dynamic Capabilities are more likely to derive greater performance benefits from Sequential Ambidexterity than those with weaker capabilities.

Empirical evidence from global studies supports this proposition. Research has shown that Dynamic Capabilities enhance the performance effects of technological competencies, innovation initiatives, and strategic decision-making processes (Miceli et al., 2021; Trieu et al., 2024). In these studies, DC functions as an enabling mechanism that strengthens the conversion of strategic investments into tangible organisational outcomes. Similarly, Peng et al. (2022) argue that organisations capable of effectively managing exploration–exploitation transitions are more likely to realise the performance advantages associated with ambidextrous strategies. However, most of this evidence originates from corporate and industrial settings, leaving uncertainty regarding whether similar moderating effects exist in higher education institutions.

Within universities, implementing Sequential Ambidexterity often involves introducing new academic programs, technologies, and partnerships while simultaneously improving existing teaching, research, and administrative processes. The success of these transitions depends heavily on institutional capabilities to anticipate environmental changes, mobilise resources, and adapt organisational structures. Although conceptual arguments suggest that Dynamic Capabilities should strengthen the relationship between SEQ and institutional performance, empirical evidence within higher education remains limited, particularly in developing-country contexts.

In Africa, universities operate in environments characterised by funding constraints, regulatory uncertainty, technological disruption, and increasing competition for students and resources. These conditions underscore the importance of Dynamic Capabilities, as institutions must continuously adapt to survive and remain competitive. Yet, studies examining the interaction between ambidexterity and Dynamic Capabilities in African higher education institutions remain scarce, with most research focusing on either organisational performance or strategic capabilities independently.

The Kenyan context is particularly relevant for examining this relationship. Chartered private universities face significant challenges, including fluctuating student enrollment, financial pressures, evolving regulatory requirements, and growing competition from public universities and alternative education providers. Under such conditions, the ability to sense changes in student demand and policy environments, seize emerging opportunities through timely program development, and transform organisational structures may determine whether Sequential Ambidexterity generates performance gains or leads to strategic instability. Universities with stronger Dynamic Capabilities are therefore expected to benefit more from ambidextrous cycling than institutions with weaker capabilities (Marin et al., 2025).

Despite the theoretical relevance of this interaction, empirical studies examining Sequential Ambidexterity and performance in Kenyan private universities are virtually nonexistent. Existing Kenyan research has largely focused on organisational ambidexterity in other sectors, including coffee marketing cooperative societies (Hesbon Mbuthia Kiura et al., 2023), health facilities (Melly & Mosong, 2024), and telecommunication firms (Njiru & Mutua, 2024). Moreover, these studies have generally examined ambidexterity as a direct predictor, mediator, or moderator of performance, without explicitly investigating how Dynamic Capabilities influence the effectiveness of ambidextrous strategies. Consequently, a significant gap remains in understanding the interplay between Sequential Ambidexterity, Dynamic Capabilities, and organisational performance within resource-constrained higher education environments.

This study addresses this gap by examining whether Dynamic Capabilities moderate the relationship between Sequential Ambidexterity and the performance of chartered private universities in Kenya. Accordingly, the study hypothesises that:

H2*: Dynamic Capabilities significantly moderate the relationship between Sequential Ambidexterity and performance, such that the positive effect of Sequential Ambidexterity on performance is stronger when Dynamic Capabilities are high.*

The relationships among the variables are presented in Figure 1, which depicts the study's conceptual framework.

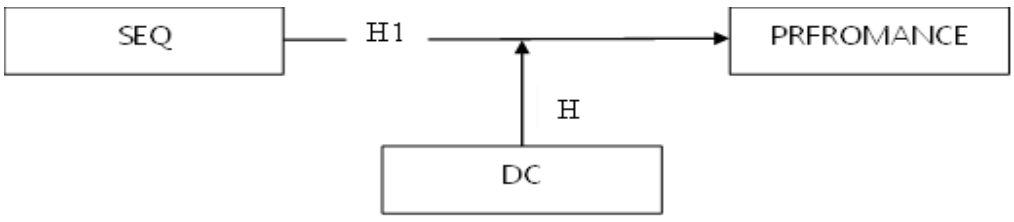

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework (Source: Author)

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationships among sequential ambidexterity, dynamic capabilities, and perceived organisational performance in chartered private universities in Kenya. The target population comprised 27 chartered private universities as accredited by the Commission for University Education (CUE), with senior management staff, including Registrars, Deans, and Directors of Quality Assurance and Research and Innovation, serving as the unit of analysis due to their strategic decision-making roles. The study sample size was 243 respondents. The purposive sampling technique was used to ensure that respondents with relevant knowledge of organisational processes were included. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to the selected respondents.

A pilot study was conducted in three chartered private universities in Kenya to pretest the research instrument. A total of 30 respondents participated in the pilot exercise. The pilot testing identified several issues, including ambiguous wording in some items, minor inconsistencies in terminology across constructs, and overlapping statements within the dynamic capabilities scale. Based on the feedback, the questionnaire was revised by simplifying complex item wording, standardising terminology across all constructs, and refining overlapping items to improve clarity and content precision. The revised instrument demonstrated improved clarity, coherence, and ease of response, and the pilot universities were excluded from the final data collection. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board and National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI), and participation was voluntary with strict confidentiality and anonymity assured.

Data analysis was conducted using Advanced Analysis of Composites (ADANCO) 2.2.1 software employing PLS-SEM (Henseler, 2015). ADANCO is specifically designed for composite-based structural equation modelling because it easily handles complex models, small sample sizes, and non-normal data without the strict assumptions of covariance-based software. Most importantly, ADANCO automatically calculates and outputs the exact triad of fit indices required for this analysis along with their bootstrap significance tests, ensuring a rigorous and seamless model assessment. In the measurement model stage, indicator reliability, construct reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were assessed (Henseler et al., 2015; Sarstedt, Ringle & Hair, 2021). In the structural model stage, multicollinearity and model fit were evaluated (Hair et al., 2022). Consistent with Hair et al. (2022), structural model quality was assessed using bootstrap confidence intervals, the coefficient of determination (R^2), and effect sizes (f^2). The R^2 statistic evaluates the model's explanatory power, with values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 indicating substantial, moderate, and weak levels of explained variance, respectively (Hair et al., 2022).

The f^2 statistic assesses the contribution of each exogenous construct to the endogenous construct, with larger values indicating stronger effects. In the model estimation stage, the bootstrap approach is a non-parametric resampling technique that fits well to real-world data because it does not rely on assumptions of normality, making it particularly suitable for complex models and survey-based data. moreover, it enables the estimation of standard errors and the construction of confidence intervals for path coefficients, thereby providing robust tests of statistical significance for both direct and interaction effects. In the model specification stage, the moderation effect was examined using the recommended two-stage approach based on composite scores for Sequential Ambidexterity and Dynamic Capabilities (Henseler & Chin, 2010). The two-stage procedure is straightforward: in the first stage, latent-variable scores for the moderator and the exogenous variable are generated and saved. In the second stage, an interaction term

is created by multiplying the scores to obtain a single item-interaction term. The significance of the interaction term was assessed using 500 bootstrapping samples. In terms of measurement, Sequential ambidexterity (SEQ) was measured using items reflecting resource allocation, knowledge management and organisational structure (Seidle, 2019).

Dynamic capability items were captured through indicators of sensing, seizing, and transforming capabilities (Matysiak, Rugman, & Bausch, 2018). Organisational institutional performance was assessed using indicators of employee engagement, research outputs, and student completion rates (Nazir & Islam, 2017; Zepke, Butler, & Leach, 2012).' All constructs are specified as reflective a priori measurement models, where the observed indicators are assumed to reflect the underlying latent variables (Hanafiah, 2020).

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents. Of the 243 questionnaires distributed, 195 usable responses were returned, yielding a response rate of 80.2 per cent, which exceeded the recommended threshold of 70 per cent (Babbie, 2020). The majority of respondents were male (59.5%), and most were aged 31-50 years (67.7%). Regarding education level, 50.8 per cent had a master's degree, while 37.4 per cent held a PhD.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	116	59.5
Gender	Female	79	40.5
Age in years	0–30	25	12.8
Age in years	31–50	132	67.7
Age in years	Above 50	38	19.5
Education	Bachelor's	23	11.8
Education	Master's	99	50.8
Education	PhD	73	37.4

Source: Survey data (2026)

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 shows that respondents generally reported moderate levels across all constructs, with mean scores clustered around the mid-point of the scale, indicating relatively consistent perceptions of sequential ambidexterity, dynamic capabilities, and institutional performance. Within sequential ambidexterity, organisational structure (M = 3.31) was rated slightly higher than resource allocation (M = 3.30) and knowledge management (M = 3.28), suggesting that organisational structure is perceived as the strongest

enabler of ambidextrous practices. For dynamic capabilities, sensing (M = 3.35) emerged as the most pronounced dimension, followed closely by seizing (M = 3.31) and transforming (M = 3.28), indicating that universities are more effective in identifying environmental opportunities than in fully reconfiguring internal systems. Regarding performance, student completion (M = 3.36) received the highest rating, while research output (M = 3.19) received the lowest, suggesting a stronger emphasis on teaching outcomes than on research productivity. The observed pattern suggests that while Kenyan private universities demonstrate moderately developed strategic capabilities and performance outcomes, there remains a relative weakness in transformation-oriented capability and research output, which may constrain long-term institutional competitiveness.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics Results for the Study Constructs

Construct	Dimension	Mean	Std. Dev
SEQ	Resource Allocation	3.30	0.83
SEQ	Knowledge Management	3.28	0.88
SEQ	Organizational Structure	3.31	0.85
DC	Sensing	3.35	0.86
DC	Seizing	3.31	0.88
DC	Transforming	3.28	0.83
Performance	Student Completion	3.36	0.85
Performance	Employee Engagement	3.23	0.86
Performance	Research Output	3.19	0.83

Source: Survey data (2026)

Measurement Model Assessment for Reliability and Validity

The quality of a reflective measurement model in PLS SEM is assessed using indicator loadings, composite reliability, and convergent and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2020). As shown in Table 3, Factor loadings range from 0.59 (DC) to 0.85 (SEQ). Since most loadings meet or exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, the indicators demonstrate acceptable reliability. Although a few items fall slightly below 0.70, they were retained because they still exceed the minimum acceptable level of 0.50 and contribute to the content validity of the constructs (Hair et al., 2020).

Table 3: Reliability and Convergent Validity Results

Construct	indicator Loading Range	Composite reliability	AVE
SEQ	0.67–0.85	0.937	0.559
DC	0.59–0.81	0.916	0.549
Performance	0.69–0.76	0.939	0.510

Source: Survey data

On discriminant validity, one of the recommended approaches to assess discriminant validity is through the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT) (Schuberth, Henseler & Dijkstra, 2018). As shown in Table 4, all HTMT values are substantially below the conservative threshold of 0.85 (Hu & Bentler, 1999), ranging from 0.2247 to 0.5824. These results indicate that each construct is empirically distinct from the others and captures a unique conceptual domain. Consequently, discriminant validity was established for all constructs in the model.

Table 4: Discriminant Validity: HTMT Criterion Results

Construct	SEQ	PFM	DYN	SEQ*DYN
SEQ				
PFM	0.5824			
DYN	0.3349	0.5318		
SEQ*DYN	0.4074	0.3411	0.2247	

Discriminant validity was further assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion. The square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct is greater than its correlations with other constructs. confirming adequate discriminant validity among the constructs (Table 5). Collectively, the HTMT and Fornell–Larcker assessments suggests satisfactory discriminant validity of the measurement model.

Table 5: Discriminant Validity: Fornell-Larcker Criterion Results

Construct	SEQ	PFM	DYN
SEQ	**0.5717**		
PFM	0.3425	**0.5273**	
DYN	0.1251	0.3035	**0.5413**
SEQ*DYN	0.1723	0.1196	0.0563

Squared correlations; AVE in the diagonal. SEQ; Sequential ambidexterity, PFM; performance, DYN; dynamic capabilities, SEQ*DYN; interaction term.

The purpose of this measurement model assessment section is to establish the reliability and validity of the study constructs before proceeding to structural model evaluation and hypothesis testing. The results confirm adequate indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. The measurement model demonstrates satisfactory reliability and validity, providing a sound foundation for evaluating and interpreting the structural relationships among the study constructs.

Structural Model for Hypothesis Testing

Goodness of Model Fit

At structural model phase, the three essential distance measures currently required as the baseline standard in composite-based SEM are the SRMR, the squared Euclidean distance (dL), and the geodesic distance (dG). Model adequacy is established when the SRMR is below the recommended 0.08 threshold (Hu & Bentler, 1999) and the bootstrap-based exact fit tests for both d ULS and dG fall within the 95 per cent confidence interval (Schuberth, Henseler, & Dijkstra, 2018).

In Table 6, the SRMR and exact fit measures (d_ULS and dG) show a well-fitting model. This is because the observed SRMR value of 0.0265 indicates an excellent model fit, as it is below the recommended threshold of 0.08. Additionally, both dL (0.0252) and dG (0.0070) are below their respective bootstrap quantiles (HI95 and HI99), suggesting that the discrepancy between the empirical and model-implied covariance matrices is not statistically significant.

Table 6: Goodness of Model Fit Results

	Value	HI95	HI99
SRMR	0.0265	0.0335	0.0396
dULS: Squared Euclidean Distance	0.0252	0.0403	0.0564
dG: Geodesic Distance	0.0070	0.0096	0.0122

The VIF values range from 1.48 to 2.65 across all constructs, which are below the conservative threshold of 3.3, indicating that multicollinearity is not a concern in the measurement model (Table 7). The interaction construct (SEQ × DYN), specified using the two-stage approach, shows a VIF of 1.000, consistent with its single-indicator specification. The detailed indicator-level VIF results are presented in Appendix A for reference.

Table 7: Variance Inflation Factor Results

Construct	**VIF Range**
SEQ	1.969 – 2.647
DYN	1.930 – 2.110
PFM	1.483 – 2.255
SEQ * DYN	1.000

Note: SEQ; Sequential ambidexterity, PFM; performance, DYN; dynamic capabilities, SEQ*DYN; interaction term

Figure 2 presents the study's structural model. Sequential Ambidexterity (SEQ), Dynamic Capabilities (DC), and their interaction term (SEQ *DC) are specified as the exogenous variables, while perceived organizational performance is the endogenous variable. The interaction term (SEQ * DC) is constructed using the product indicator approach in line with PLS-SEM requirements for moderation analysis. The model illustrates the hypothesised direct effects of SEQ and DC on performance, as well as the moderating effect of Dynamic Capabilities on the relationship between Sequential Ambidexterity and perceived organisational performance.

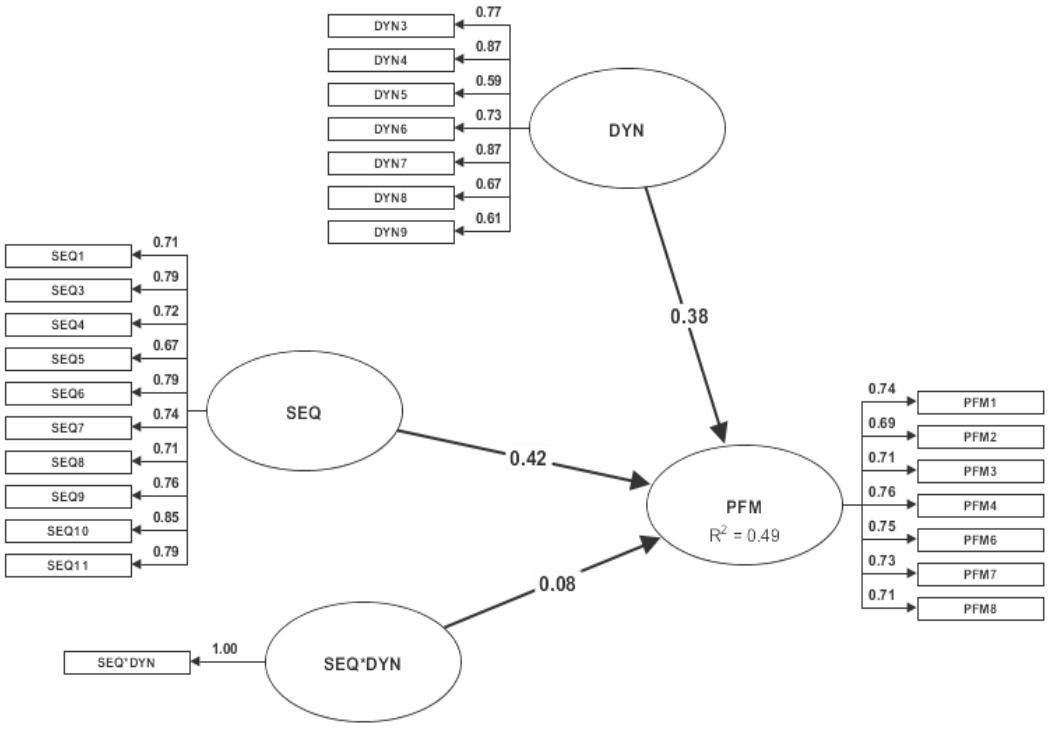

Figure 2: Structural Model

As shown in Table 8, the relationship between SEQ and performance is positive and significant (β = 0.422, p< 0.05). The hypothesis H1 is thus supported. The interaction term (SEQ*DC) has a positive and significant association on the institutional performance (β =0.085, p=.026), thus H2 is also supported meaning Dynamic Capability moderates the relation between SEQ and performance. Thus, the moderation hypothesis H2 is also supported. Since the interaction effect was found to be statistically significant, a moderation plot is generated to facilitate the interpretation of the moderating relationship. The slope of sequential ambidexterity is steeper at higher levels of dynamic capabilities, showing that the relationship is stronger when dynamic capabilities are high and weaker when they are low (Figure 3).

Table 8: Bootstrap Regression Coefficient Results

Effect	β	Standard error	t-value	p-value	2.5%-97.5% CI	2.5%-97.5% CI	f2
SEQ -> PFM	0.4220	0.0686	6.0804	0.0000	0.2363	0.5896	0.2193
DYN -> PFM	0.3865	0.0645	5.9615	0.0000	0.2052	0.5366	0.1703
SEQ*DYN -> PFM	0.0850	0.038	2.2244	0.0263	0.0728	0.1023	.0210

Note: SEQ; Sequential ambidexterity, PFM; performance, DYN; dynamic capabilities, SEQ*DYN; interaction term.

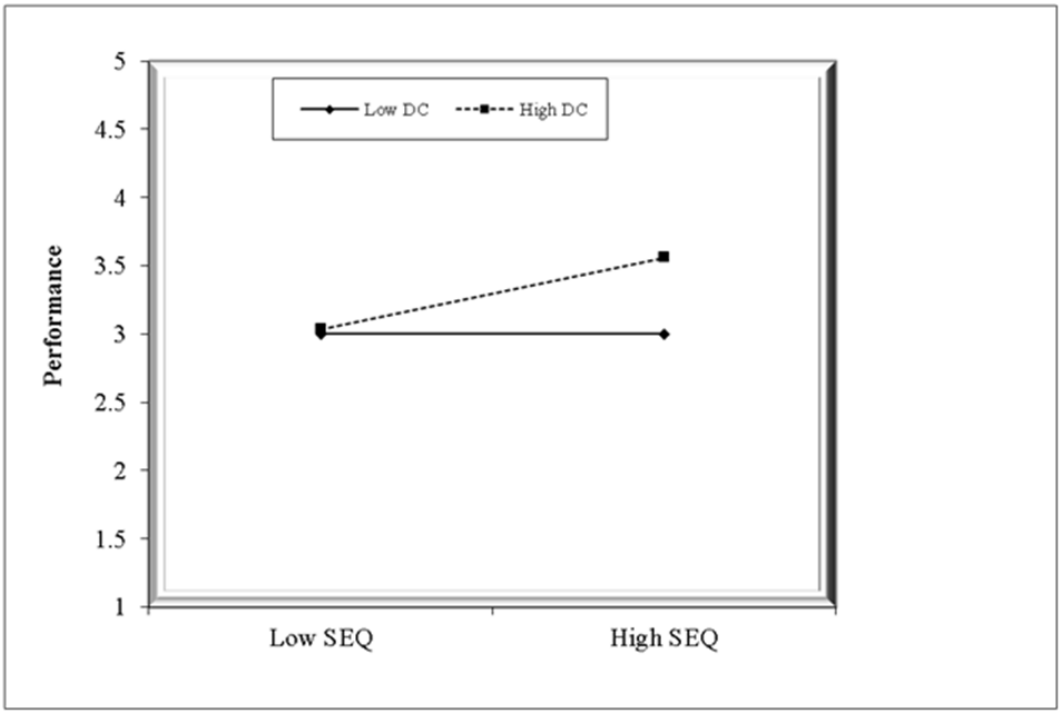

Figure 3: **Moderation Plot showing the Moderation Effect of DC on SEQ-Performance Relation**

Regarding the efficacy of the fitted structural model (Figure 2), the model has a moderate in -sample prediction power (R^2 = 0.49), indicating that sequential ambidexterity, dynamic capabilities, and their interaction jointly explain a moderate 49 per cent of the variance in perceived university performance, as reflected in research outputs, employee engagement, and student completion outcomes. Moreover, the effect sizes (f^2) indicate that sequential ambidexterity has a medium effect on performance (f^2 = 0.2193), while Dynamic Capabilities also demonstrates a medium effect (f^2 = 0.1703).

In contrast, the interaction effect between Sequential Ambidexterity and Dynamic Capabilities exhibits a small effect size (f^2 = 0.0210), suggesting a minimal contribution of the moderation term to the explained variance in perceived organisational performance. The results provide substantial support for the proposed theoretical framework (Figure 1), as the estimated structural relationships were largely consistent with the hypothesised directions. The model therefore provides a reasonable representation of the mechanisms by which sequential ambidexterity and dynamic capabilities relate to perceived university performance.

Discussion

The study found that SEQ has a positive and statistically significant effect on the performance of chartered private universities in Kenya. The structural model further showed that SEQ explained 49 per cent of the variance in institutional performance, indicating that the ability of universities to balance exploration and exploitation activities over time plays a meaningful role in improving organisational outcomes. All the research hypotheses were supported in this study. These findings support the theoretical argument that organisations benefit when they strategically alternate between exploratory activities, such as innovation, and exploitation activities focused on efficiency and operational stability. In the context of private universities, this temporal balancing enables institutions to pursue new programmes, research initiatives,

and partnerships while simultaneously strengthening existing academic and administrative processes (Thomas et al., 2023).

These findings are consistent with those of Soares et al. (2018), who demonstrated that organisational ambidexterity significantly influenced institutional performance in Brazilian higher education institutions. Sequential ambidexterity accounted for significant institutional performance, suggesting that universities that effectively balance exploration and exploitation are more likely to achieve superior outcomes in research outputs, student graduation rate and employee engagement.

The study findings align with existing literature on organisational ambidexterity, particularly Shuwaikh et al. (2022), who emphasise temporal sequencing as a key mechanism for improving organisational effectiveness. In this approach, institutions alternate between exploration and exploitation, enabling them to balance innovation and efficiency rather than simply responding to environmental changes. This view is supported in the Kenyan context by Tanui and Mosong (2024), who find that organisational ambidexterity enhances institutional performance through improved efficiency and service delivery. In Kenyan private universities, these results suggest that balancing innovation with operational stability is a practical requirement for improving outcomes, including student completion rates, research outputs, and employee engagement.

Overall, the findings reinforce the view that performance depends on an institution's ability to maintain a workable balance between exploration and exploitation in dynamic and resource-constrained environments. From a dynamic capability perspective, sequential ambidexterity (SEQ), as reflected through resource allocation, knowledge management, and organisational structure, enables organisations to establish structured learning and coordination processes that support adaptation over time. These mechanisms facilitate the effective deployment and reconfiguration of resources, the sharing and utilisation of institutional knowledge, and the alignment of structural arrangements to evolving strategic needs. In turn, dynamic capabilities complement this process by enabling institutions to identify emerging opportunities, mobilise resources to exploit them, and reconfigure internal processes to sustain performance improvements. Consistent with Peng et al. (2022), such sequential shifts between exploration and exploitation foster capability development, enabling organisations to progressively enhance competitiveness and performance through continuous learning and resource realignment.

In the context of Kenyan chartered private universities, SEQ may manifest through the alternation between developing innovative academic programmes, expanding research initiatives, and strengthening existing teaching and administrative systems. Chartered private universities in Kenya that can effectively manage this balance are likely to achieve better outcomes in research productivity, academic programme relevance, institutional growth, student population, graduation rate, and infrastructure.

This study also found that dynamic capability significantly moderates the relationship between SEQ and performance. Dynamic capacities enable organisations to sense opportunities, seize them through strategic actions, and transform resources to adapt to changes in the business environment. When chartered private universities in Kenya possess strong DC, such as continuous learning, adaptability, and resource reconfiguration, they are better able to translate their alternating focus on exploration and exploitation into tangible institutional outcomes. These findings align with the study by Peng et al. (2022), who demonstrated that SEQ can serve as a foundation for developing DC that enhance organisational

transformation and performance. Their study highlighted that organisations that integrate ambidextrous strategies with strong DC experience stronger performance improvements. Similarly, research by Peng et al. (2019) found that DC strengthens the relationship between organisational ambidexterity and firm performance. Their findings indicated that firms with higher levels of DC are better able to leverage ambidexterity to improve performance outcomes. For chartered private universities in Kenya, this suggests that ambidexterity alone may not be sufficient to guarantee improved performance. Institutions must also develop the internal capabilities required to continuously adapt, learn, and reconfigure their resources in response to emerging educational demands, technological changes, and evolving societal expectations.

This study extends the organisational ambidexterity literature by providing empirical evidence that the temporal balancing of exploration and exploitation is a vital driver of performance in higher education. More significantly, the findings highlight that the effectiveness of such strategic shifts is fundamentally dependent on an institution's DC. By demonstrating that DC significantly strengthen the relationship between SEQ and performance, the study shifts the focus from merely selecting a strategic orientation to developing the underlying routines necessary for its execution. This reinforces the RBV perspective that the capacity to sense environmental shifts, seize opportunities through decisive action, and reconfigure resources is the essential mechanism through which strategic initiatives are translated into institutional outcomes. Furthermore, by integrating these constructs within a single analytical framework, the study provides a deeper understanding of how universities in developing contexts can move beyond structural constraints to enhance their performance in increasingly competitive and dynamic environments.

The findings have important theoretical implications for ambidexterity and dynamic capabilities literature. The positive effect of sequential ambidexterity on perceived performance supports the view that organisations can achieve improved outcomes by systematically balancing exploration and exploitation through structured processes of resource allocation, knowledge management, and organisational structuring. This extends ambidexterity theory by reinforcing the relevance of sequential forms in higher education settings. However, the non-significant moderating role of dynamic capabilities suggests that sensing, seizing, and transforming capabilities do not significantly condition the relationship between ambidexterity and performance in this context. The essence, results indicate that while ambidexterity contributes directly to performance outcomes, its effects are not necessarily dependent on dynamic capabilities, thereby refining the assumed boundary conditions between strategic orientation and organisational performance in chartered private universities.

The study acknowledges that the innovative trajectory of chartered private universities in Kenya is fundamentally shaped by ambidextrous organisational tendencies. While the inherent tension between exploration and exploitation creates a classic strategic dilemma, where the latter offers immediate, certain value compared to the speculative nature of the former (Benner & Tushman, 2003; Kauppila, 2015; March, 1991), this dichotomy is increasingly reconciled by market pressure. For Kenyan private universities, exploration is no longer an optional strategic choice but an unavoidable adaptation to the demands of a digitised market. Consequently, while the impetus for change is explorative, the underlying organisational architecture remains deeply rooted in strategic exploitation, suggesting that these institutions employ sequential ambidexterity primarily as a vehicle for sustained strategic exploitation. Together, these findings support the proposed conceptual framework in this study.

Limitations

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causal relationships among organisational ambidexterity, dynamic capabilities, and organisational performance. Future studies may employ longitudinal designs to capture changes over time. Second, the study focused exclusively on chartered private universities in Kenya, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to public universities or other organisational contexts. Future research could undertake comparative studies across different institutional settings. Finally, the study relied on perceptual measures collected from respondents, which may be influenced by respondent subjectivity. Future studies should consider incorporating objective or archival performance data and multi-source information to enhance the robustness of the findings.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: This study concludes that balancing exploratory and exploitative activities is important for enhancing performance in Kenyan private universities. The findings indicate that institutions which deliberately alternate between innovation and efficiency-oriented practices are better positioned to improve institutional performance in terms of student completion rates, research outputs, and employee engagement. Strengthening institutional performance in Kenyan private universities requires the continuous development of dynamic capabilities that support sensing emerging opportunities, seizing them effectively, and transforming internal processes in response to changing conditions. This reflects the importance of building adaptive institutions capable of sustaining improvement in academic and operational outcomes.

Within the Kenyan development framework, this direction is consistent with the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA) and Kenya's Vision 2030, both of which emphasise innovation, efficiency, and institutional transformation as central pillars of national development. Higher education institutions, therefore, occupy a critical position in advancing skills development, research productivity, and human capital formation. In this regard, integrating ambidexterity practices with dynamic capability development is an essential pathway to strengthening competitiveness, improving service delivery, and supporting the transition toward a knowledge-based, transformation-oriented economy.

Recommendations: Based on the finding that Sequential Ambidexterity (SEQ) significantly drives institutional performance, Kenyan private universities should prioritise structures that allow them to successfully cycle between periods of innovation-driven exploration and efficiency-focused exploitation. Crucially, because DC significantly strengthen this relationship, university leadership should consider investing in DC to manage these structural shifts. Management should strengthen environmental scanning, strategic responsiveness, and transformation processes to provide the agility required to transition smoothly between ambidextrous phases. Governing bodies should support this by funding capacity-building programs for senior management that enhance competencies in sensing market opportunities and making timely strategic decisions, ensuring the institution can dynamically adapt its processes to sustain performance.

Suggestions for Future Research: While the model demonstrates substantial explanatory power, the interaction effect between sequential ambidexterity and dynamic capabilities yielded a small effect size. Future research should incorporate objective institutional performance metrics to complement these perceptual measures and minimise respondent bias. Additionally, because both sequential ambidexterity

and dynamic capabilities are inherently time-dependent processes, longitudinal designs are strongly recommended to track these strategic shifts and to establish stronger causal inferences within the higher education sector.

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