

## THE EFFECT OF LEADERSHIP PRACTICES ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA

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**Abstract:** *The aim of the study was to investigate the effect of leadership practices on employee performance in public secondary schools in Kenya. This study was guided by Transformational Leadership Theory. The target population consisted of 23,147 employees in public secondary schools in Kenya. Structured questionnaires were developed and pretested; a pilot study was conducted to help establish content validity and reliability of the instrument. Content validity of the instruments was verified by experts from the university department while reliability of the research instruments was assessed using Cronbach Alpha coefficient that needed to be at least 0.7 in social sciences. Data was analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS, version 21). Both descriptive and inferential statistics that included the mean, frequencies, correlation and regression analysis were used. From the study findings, the correlation between leadership practices and employee performance in Public secondary schools in Kenya was positive and significant. This means there is a statistically significant positive relationship between motivation practices and employee performance. On recommendation, the study encourages management of public secondary schools to provide good leadership to teachers to improve their performance. Future studies are encouraged to cover private secondary schools and compare the findings.*

**Keywords:** *Leadership Practices, employee performance, public secondary schools, Kenya*

### Background

Leadership is a process of a person to stir others by leading, guiding and influencing to do something in order to achieve certain results and goals (Ear, 2017). According to Ear, (2017), Leadership is a process of interaction between leaders and employees in which a leader tries to influence the behavior of employees to achieve organizational goals. The leadership Indicators proposed in this study is that the leader should be able to inspire, make proper decisions and equally be responsible. According to Ear (2017) teachers working under principals who always practice transformational leadership were more committed to the teaching profession than those under principals who occasionally or rarely practice transformational leadership. Shared values and social support from supervisors' can be important in determining employee retention.

A leader is the one who leads an organization. He makes sure that the purpose for which an organization is made is fulfilled. In other words, a leader is one who is capable of moving the organization in the direction set by him which he deems fit. While having certain leadership competencies and skills, a leader should have the ability to adapt to different leadership styles and behaviors to achieve organizational goals and objectives. At the individual level, leaders who are able to persuade, stimulate and direct employees will often be rewarded

by devotion and performance of their employees ( Lawler, 2017). Leadership is an essential part of the activities of management of people and directing their efforts towards the goals and objectives of the organization.

In the recent past years, leadership has engaged a new effective approach for managing the employees and organization at large. Organizations need strong leadership styles that stimulate their performance. According to Rosenbach, (2018) leadership is essentially the “secret” to successfully fulfilling demanding roles in today’s society. A leadership *style* encompasses a consistent combination of individual behaviors and attitudes towards group members in order to achieve goals. Effective leadership can be a fundamental tool in maximizing organizational performance and has elicited an abundance of research.

Leadership is increasingly understood to involve persuasion and explanation as well as ability to identify, affirm, and renew the values of the group the leader represents. Managerial expertise, technical skills, cultural literacy and other relevant knowledge and skills are not sufficient virtues for the leaders whose lives will be dedicated to public services. An effective leader has a responsibility to provide guidance and share the knowledge to the employee to lead them to better performance and make them experts in maintaining the quality of work (Rosenbach, 2018).

One of the main benefits of participatory leadership is that the process allows for the development of the additional leaders who can serve the organization at a later date. Because leaders who favor this style encourage active involvement on the part of everyone on the team, people often are able to express their creativity and demonstrate abilities and talents that would not be made apparent otherwise that ultimately improve the performance of employees. The discovery of these hidden assets help to benefit the work of the current team, but also alerts the organization to people within the team who should be provided with opportunities to further develop some skill or ability or future use.

Good leaders in an organization must be able to handle a wide variant of issues that can in essence become the wound that contributes to the collapse of the organization. For a leader to be prepared, they must have a strong stance of what the core values of leadership entail as well as be able to use those values in not only to envision a successful future but to equally set the proper tone to follow an appropriate path to that future. Along the way, leadership will be encountered by a multitude of obstacles that will have to be properly dealt with in order to achieve success (Chua, Basti and Hassan,2018).

Transformational Leadership is one of the most popular leadership styles. According to Rahmat, Ramly, Mallongi, & Kalla, (2019), transformational leadership involves four factors: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. These four factors make transformational leadership have an impact on the subjects. The goal of transformational leadership is to cause a positive change in individuals, help motivate them, and develop a leader within each individual. Transformational leaders want individuals to make a positive change in their lives and try to help people apply a positive change on a daily basis.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Previous studies have done quite a bit to address factors that influence employee performance. A study carried out by Schuler, Jackson and Tarique (2017), revealed that the level of performance of employees relies not only on their actual skills but also on the level of motivation each person exhibits. Motivation is an inner drive or an external inducement to behave in some particular way that will lead to rewards. Khan and Cross and Baird (2018), observed that, over-achieving and talented employees are the driving force of all organizations so it is essential for organizations to motivate and hold on to the best employees. The quality of human resource

management is a critical influence on the performance of the institution. Balkin and Gomez-mejia (2018), also revealed several studies that indicate the existence of a positive relationship between intrinsic motivation and job performance as well as intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction. This is significant to institutions in today's education environment in that, intrinsically motivated employees will perform better and therefore be more productive and also because satisfied employees will remain loyal to their institution and will feel no pressure or need to move to different institutions.

There is still much confusion about how leadership really influences employee performance. This study focuses on effect of leadership practices on employee performance in Public Secondary schools in Kenya.

### **Research Objective of the Study**

The aim of the study was to establish the effect of leadership practices on employee performance of public secondary schools in Kenya.

### **Research Question**

What is the effect of leadership practices on employee performance in public secondary schools in Kenya?

### **Research Hypothesis**

To achieve the research objectives, the following null hypothesis was posited and was tested at 0.05 significance level:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Leadership practices does not have a significant effect on employee performance in Public secondary schools in Kenya.

### **Theoretical Framework**

A transformational leader is a person who stimulates and inspires (transform) followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes (Amina and Roberts, 2017). He/she pays attention to the concerns and developmental needs of individual followers; they change followers' awareness of issues by helping them to look at old problems in a new way; and they are able to arouse, excite and inspire followers to put on extra effort to achieve group goals. Transformational leadership theory is all about leadership that creates positive change in the followers whereby they take care of each other's interests and act in the interests of the group as a whole (Bollen, 2017). The concept of transformational leadership was introduced by James Macgregor Burns in 1978 in his descriptive research on political leaders, but its usage has spread into other disciplines.

Transformational leadership enhances the motivation, morale, and performance of followers through a variety of mechanisms. These include connecting the follower's sense of identity and self to the project and the collective identity of the organization; being a role model for followers that inspires them and makes them interested; challenging followers to take greater ownership for their work, and understanding the strengths and weaknesses of followers, so the leader can align followers with tasks that enhance their performance.

Unlike the earlier theories of leadership, which did not include the ethical component, Burns (2018) connecting transformational leadership with higher-order values perceives morality as a crucial component. According to him, during the mutual interaction between transformational leaders and followers, the level of morale and motivation is both raised. According to this concept, during the interaction of leaders and followers their ethical aspirations are improved which is a sign that true leadership occurs by describing the characteristics of transformational leadership using moral concepts, Burns actually defines this style of leadership as a moral leadership.

Yukl (2018) stated that only those who appeal to the high ideals, moral values and higher-order needs of followers can be called transformational leaders. Through charisma or idealized influence, the leader expresses his/her beliefs, takes up attitudes and appeals to followers on an emotional level through a clear system of values that is presented in any action as soon as he/she becomes a model for followers. Trust between leaders and follower is built in a way that stands on solid moral and ethical grounds. Simola et al., (2017) define transformational leadership as a type of leadership in which interactions among interested parties are organized "around a collective purpose" in such a way that "transform, motivate and enhance the actions and ethical aspirations of followers." It can be concluded that our behavior is directed by the inherent system of moral values so that transformational leadership can be seen as a leadership style that leads to positive transformations and changes of the followers through the impact on the structure and strategy of the organization.

### **Data Collection Methods**

The study used both primary and secondary data collection instruments as discussed in the following subsections.

Primary data collection involved the use of questionnaires since it was suitable to gather information from a large group of respondents. Therefore the respondents were able to fill the questionnaires at their own convenience. This helped the study to get the information about the topic under study in the shortest time possible. The questionnaire was divided into sections A, B and C. Section A covered information on demographic characteristics of respondents, section B covered leadership practices while section C had information on employee performance. On the other hand, secondary data used in the study involved collection of information on performance of schools. This was collected through analysis of past school Kenya Certificate of Secondary examinations for the last ten years (2008 to 2018).

### **Pilot study**

Piloting study was done to enhance the questionnaire's validity, a pilot study was conducted on 30 employees of public secondary schools in Kisumu county. The result of the pilot test was used to identify areas where the questionnaire require correction like changing the order of questions, underlining key terms in the questions and use of simple words in questions to obtain more information on the study objectives. The questionnaire was then be administered the second time to establish if the correction were done correctly.

In this study, the questionnaires were checked for validity and included the expert's opinion that is supervisors and other experts from school of Human Resource Management to judge the validity of the questionnaire and the questions in the written task.

To determine the reliability of the findings, Cronbach's alpha correlation coefficient of was computed at 95% confidence interval for all the variables under study. Total Cronbach's alpha correlation coefficient was found to be 0.800, which indicated that the level of internal consistency for the items was 76 percent. Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) stated that items are considered reliable if they yield a reliability coefficient of 0.70 and above.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

An analysis of data was done to summarize the essential features and relationship of data in order to generalize and determine patterns of behavior and particular outcomes. The completed questionnaires were edited for completeness and consistency before responses could be processed. Qualitative and Quantitative technique was used to analyze the data.

The data collected from open ended questions and interviews was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The quantitative data from the closed-ended questions was analyzed using descriptive statistics to meaningfully describe the distribution of measurements of the phenomena under study. This involved use of measures of distributions (frequencies and percentages) and presentation of information in American Psychology of Association Tables. Multiple regression models fitted the study to test the independent variables (motivation, training, and leadership style and work environment) affect the dependent variable (employee performance) as represented in the regression equation below.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$$

Where

Y = Employee performance

$\beta_0, \beta_1$  – are regression coefficients to be estimated

$X_1$  = Leadership Practices

$\varepsilon$  = error term

### Key Findings

The correlation between leadership practices and employee performance in Public secondary schools in Kenya was calculated using Pearson’s Correlation as shown in the Table 1.

**Table 4.1: Correlation between leadership practices and employee performance**

	Leadership	Employee Performance
<b>Leadership</b>	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.598**
	N	360
<b>Employee Performance</b>	Pearson Correlation	.598**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	360

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation between leadership practices and employee performance is 0.598 (p = 0.000). This means there is a positive relationship between leadership style and employee performance. We thus fail to accept the null hypothesis and state that there is a significant relationship between leadership style and employee performance. The ANOVA results were as summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2 Model summary of leadership Practices**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	RStd. Error of Estimate	of the Durbin-Watson
1	.598 <sup>a</sup>	.357	.347	2.59176	1.229

a. Predictors: (Constant), Leadership  
 b. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

From Table 2 results, the value of R was 0.598 while R square was 0.357. This implied that 35.7 percent change in employee performance was explained by leadership practices. The hypothesis was therefore rejected.

The ANOVA results between leadership and employee performance were summarized in Table 3.

**Table 3: ANOVA results of Leadership and Employee Performance**

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	7135.643	1	7135.643	1062.294	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	2404.757	358	6.717		
	Total	9540.400	359			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance  
 b. Predictors: (Constant), Leadership

The F statistics of 1062.294 from the results in Table 3 was significant since the value of p= 0.000. The findings thus indicated that leadership explained the variance change in employee performance. The coefficients of leadership and employee motivation were summarized in Table 4.

**Table 4.4: Coefficients of Leadership and Employee Performance**

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	10.126	.733		13.813	.000
	Leadership	.953	.029	.598	32.593	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

From the results in Table 4, the student t test increased from 13.813 at p=0.000 to 32.593 at p=0.000. This meant that every single unit of leadership practices account for additional 32.593 units' positive change in employee performance. Thus the summary of the model was expressed in the equation;

$$Y = 0.953 + 0.598 X_1 + \epsilon$$

Where Y = Employee performance,  $\beta_0 = 0.953$ ,  $\beta_1 = 0.598$ ,  $X_1 =$  Leadership Practices and  $\epsilon$  is the error term.

### Conclusion and Recommendation

The correlation between leadership practices and employee performance is 0.298 (p = 0.000). This means there is a weak positive relationship between leadership style and employee performance. We thus fail to accept the null hypothesis and state that there is a significant relationship between leadership style and employee performance. They should also observe ethical standards and involve their employees in decision making to enhance good employee performance. They should provide good leadership that should empower employees and encourage accountability thus providing employee with autonomy to objectively express their opinion about work. The management should offer sufficient and prompt salary payment which is accompanied with salary review through clear policy guidelines in commensuration of the employee qualification. Further, it should also reward employees depending on the job performance.

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