

Research Article

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Influence of Leadership Commitment on Organizational Management Performance of Universities in Meru County

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Abstract

Effective leadership is fundamental to the success of any institution, particularly in academic settings where leaders play a crucial role in guiding strategic direction, fostering a conducive working environment, and promoting organizational growth and development. Leadership commitment encompasses the dedication, passion, and accountability demonstrated by university leaders towards achieving institutional goals and objectives. The purpose of the study was to determine the influence of leadership commitment on organizational management performance of Universities in Meru County. The study employed a descriptive research design to explore the correlation between leadership commitment and organizational management performance across six universities in Meru County. It encompassed all 72 individuals, including administrators, faculty, and staff members, from both public and private institutions. Quantitative data was gathered through structured surveys, utilizing standardized scales. Analysis involved descriptive statistics for summarization and inferential statistics like correlation and regression analysis to explore the relationship. Findings were presented visually using tables, charts, and graphs. The study findings suggest a strong positive relationship between leadership commitment and organizational management performance in Universities of Meru County. Participants acknowledged the leadership's dedication to the institution's mission and vision, effective communication of goals, and active solicitation of input. While fostering a culture of trust and transparency could be improved, overall, leadership commitment was seen as a significant driver of organizational success. The regression analysis underscores this, indicating that leadership commitment explains 72.6% of the variation in management performance. Based on the findings, the study concluded that leadership commitment significantly influences organizational management performance in Meru County universities. Leadership dedication, as evidenced by effective

Keywords

Leadership commitment, organizational management performance, Universities influence.

communication and engagement, plays a pivotal role in shaping organizational effectiveness. The study recommended that universities prioritize fostering leadership commitment through training, feedback mechanisms, and transparent communication channels. Cultivating a culture of dedication and inclusivity among leaders enhances organizational effectiveness and stakeholder engagement.

Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, universities face increasing pressure to excel not only in academic pursuits but also in administrative efficiency and effectiveness. The role of leadership within these institutions is paramount, as it sets the tone for organizational culture, strategic direction, and overall performance (Purwanto, 2020). Leadership commitment is fundamental for enhancing the organizational management performance of universities. It encompasses the dedicated involvement of university leaders in setting strategic directions, fostering a conducive environment, and efficiently managing resources. This commitment significantly influences various aspects of university operations, including strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, innovation, and accountability mechanisms (Sunarsi et al., 2020).

According to Sungu *et al.* (2019) through leadership commitment, universities can articulate a clear vision aligned with their mission and values. This vision serves as a guiding framework for prioritizing initiatives and allocating resources effectively. Moreover, leaders who demonstrate a strong commitment to excellence cultivate a culture that values continuous improvement, collaboration, and innovation. This, in turn, enhances the institution's ability to attract and retain talented faculty, staff, and students (Astuty & Udin, 2020).

Furthermore, leadership commitment plays a crucial role in fostering partnerships and collaborations with external stakeholders, including government agencies, industry partners, alumni, and the broader community. These partnerships facilitate knowledge exchange,

resource mobilization, and the creation of opportunities for research, experiential learning, and community engagement (Djaelani *et al.*, 2021).

Additionally, leadership commitment to performance evaluation and accountability mechanisms ensures that the university remains accountable to its stakeholders and continuously strives for excellence. Saleem et al. (2019) setting clear goals, monitoring progress, and holding individuals and units accountable for outcomes, leaders promote transparency, efficiency, and effectiveness in university operations.

In India, leadership commitment has played a pivotal role in enhancing organizational management performance in universities. The country's higher education sector has witnessed significant growth and transformation, largely driven by visionary leadership within academic institutions (Bashir & Gani, 2020). One key aspect of leadership commitment in Indian universities is the emphasis on fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and industry-academic partnerships. This approach has led to the development of innovative programs, research initiatives, and knowledge transfer activities that bridge the gap between academia and industry, thereby enhancing the relevance and impact of academic research (Sarangal *et al.*, 2020).

Additionally, Indian university leaders have demonstrated a strong commitment to promoting diversity and inclusivity within their institutions. Baba *et al.* (2021) embracing diverse perspectives and fostering an inclusive campus culture, universities in India have been able to attract top talent, promote creativity and innovation, and foster a vibrant academic community. Moreover, leadership commitment to effective governance structures and transparent decision-making processes has contributed to the efficient

allocation of resources and the implementation of strategic initiatives that drive long-term institutional success (Baba *et al.*, 2021).

In China, leadership commitment has been instrumental in driving organizational management performance in universities to unprecedented levels. Chinese universities have benefited from strong governmental support and strategic leadership, which have prioritized investment in research infrastructure, talent development, and internationalization efforts (Yuan *et al.*, 2021). One notable aspect of leadership commitment in Chinese universities is the emphasis on promoting academic excellence through rigorous performance evaluation and incentive mechanisms (Wang *et al.*, 2020).

Furthermore, Chinese university leaders have demonstrated a proactive approach to innovation and entrepreneurship, fostering a culture of risk-taking and experimentation within academic institutions. This has led to the emergence of vibrant startup ecosystems and technology transfer networks that contribute to economic development and societal impact (Meng & Sun, 2019). Additionally, leadership commitment to fostering global partnerships and international collaborations has enabled Chinese universities to enhance their global reputation and attract top talent from around the world, further fueling their research output and academic influence (Haiyan, & Allan, 2021).

In Ghana, leadership commitment has been a driving force behind the improvement of organizational management performance in universities. According to Donkor (2021) Ghanaian universities have faced numerous challenges, including limited resources, infrastructure deficits, and quality assurance issues. However, visionary leadership has enabled these institutions to navigate these challenges and make significant strides in enhancing their academic reputation and institutional effectiveness. One key aspect of leadership commitment in Ghanaian universities is the emphasis on stakeholder engagement and community partnerships. University leaders have

worked closely with government agencies, industry stakeholders, and local communities to identify priorities, mobilize resources, and address societal needs through research, outreach, and service initiatives (Donkor, 2021). Moreover, leadership commitment to promoting academic freedom and institutional autonomy has empowered faculty and staff to pursue excellence in teaching, research, and service, thereby enhancing overall institutional performance and impact (Andoh & Ghansah, 2019).

In South Africa, leadership commitment has been instrumental in driving organizational management performance in universities amidst a complex socio-political landscape Akanji *et al.* (2020). South African universities have historically played a crucial role in advancing social justice, democracy, and economic development in the country. Leadership commitment to promoting equity, diversity, and transformation within academic institutions has been central to their success in fostering inclusive and representative learning environments (Jamali *et al.*, 2022).

Additionally, South African university leaders have demonstrated a strong commitment to promoting interdisciplinary research and addressing pressing societal challenges, such as poverty, inequality, and environmental sustainability (Mukhezekule & Tefera, 2019). This commitment has led to the development of innovative research programs and collaborative initiatives that have contributed to national development priorities. Moreover, leadership commitment to promoting student success and well-being has led to the implementation of student support services and initiatives that enhance retention, graduation rates, and overall academic achievement (Brouwers, & Paltu, 2020).

Within the Kenyan context, universities are vital contributors to national development, providing education, research, and innovation that drive socioeconomic progress. However, the sector faces various challenges, such as limited resources, increasing competition, and evolving

regulatory requirements. In this environment, the quality of leadership within universities becomes paramount for ensuring efficient management and sustainable performance (Kubai & Odhiambo, 2022).

Meru County, located in Kenya, is home to several universities that play a significant role in the region's socio-economic development and human capital formation. Understanding the influence of leadership commitment on the organizational management performance of universities in Meru County is crucial for enhancing their effectiveness and contribution to the community (Kuria & Mose, 2019). Leadership commitment encompasses the dedication of university leaders to strategic planning, resource management, stakeholder engagement, and fostering a culture of excellence and innovation. Namutebi (2019) examining this phenomenon, stakeholders can identify areas of strength and weakness within university management practices, thereby informing policy decisions and institutional strategies to improve performance and enhance the quality of education and research in Meru County.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the recognized importance of leadership commitment in organizational management within Kenyan universities, there persist challenges that hinder optimal performance. These include inconsistent leadership vision, inadequate resource allocation, bureaucratic hurdles, and resistance to change (Kuria & Mose, 2019). Furthermore, the lack of effective leadership strategies tailored to the dynamic needs of academic institutions exacerbates issues such as faculty morale, student engagement, research output, and international ranking. Such problems impede the realization of the full potential of universities in Kenya, hindering their ability to address national development goals and compete effectively on the global stage (Otieno & Njoroge, 2019). Addressing these challenges necessitates a comprehensive understanding of the intricate relationship between leadership commitment and

organizational management performance within the context of Kenyan universities. The study therefore, sought to determine the influence of leadership commitment on organizational management performance of Universities in Meru County.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to determine the influence of leadership commitment on organizational management performance of Universities in Meru County.

Justification of the study

This study investigates the influence of leadership commitment on organizational management performance within universities in Meru County. Understanding this relationship is crucial for optimizing the effectiveness and efficiency of academic institutions in the region. By identifying the impact of leadership commitment on management performance, this study aims to provide actionable insights for university leaders and policymakers to enhance organizational governance, strategic planning, and resource allocation, ultimately contributing to the socio-economic development of Meru County.

Theoretical review

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational Leadership Theory was introduced by James MacGregor Burns in his book "Leadership" in 1978. This theory posits that effective leaders inspire and motivate followers to achieve higher levels of performance by emphasizing vision, innovation, and organizational values. Transformational leader's exhibit charisma, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and inspirational motivation, thereby influencing followers to transcend self-interest for the collective good (Kwan, 2020). In the context of universities in Meru County, transformational leadership is pivotal for enhancing organizational management performance. Leaders who embody this approach

inspire faculty, staff, and students to align with the institution's vision, goals, and values. Reza (2019) fostering a culture of innovation, collaboration, and continuous improvement, transformational leaders empower stakeholders to contribute their best efforts towards achieving academic excellence, research innovation, and community engagement. Moreover, transformational leaders prioritize individualized consideration, recognizing the diverse needs and aspirations of stakeholders within the university community. Through promoting inclusivity, mentorship, and professional development opportunities, they cultivate a supportive environment conducive to personal growth and organizational success (Galli, 2019).

Influence of Leadership Commitment on Organizational Management Performance

Leadership commitment stands as a critical determinant of organizational management performance, wielding profound influence on various facets of organizational effectiveness and efficiency. This essay delves into an exploration of seminal literature concerning the influence of leadership commitment on organizational management performance, with a particular focus on its implications for universities in Meru County. Sunguet *et al.* (2019) conducted a meta-analysis, revealing a positive correlation between transformational leadership and organizational performance across diverse sectors. This finding underscores the significance of leadership commitment in driving organizational success. However, a crucial research gap persists in the limited examination of specific organizational contexts such as universities. Jiatong *et al.* (2022) examined authentic leadership in the United States, unveiling its positive impact on organizational performance through fostering trust and ethical behavior. While authentic leadership embodies aspects of commitment, further research is warranted to elucidate its applicability within the unique milieu of academic institutions in Meru County.

Ibrahim and Daniel (2019) comprehensive review of leadership literature accentuates leadership commitment as a linchpin of organizational effectiveness. Yet, the scarcity of empirical studies within educational settings underscores the need for targeted research to fill this gap and provide actionable insights for university leaders. Saha *et al.* (2020) contributed empirical evidence demonstrating the significant predictive power of transformational leadership on organizational outcomes, including performance. Nonetheless, the underlying mechanisms necessitate deeper investigation, particularly within the organizational context of universities in Meru County.

Gbadegehin and Akinbode (2018) conducted a cross-sectional study in Nigeria, affirming the positive impact of transformational leadership on organizational performance. However, the mediating variables linking leadership styles to performance outcomes warrant further exploration to elucidate the intricacies of this relationship within the higher education landscape. Kim and Beehr (2020) offered insights into the differential effects of transformational and transactional leadership on performance in military units. Replication of these findings in civilian organizational contexts, including universities, would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of leadership's impact on management performance. Katsaros *et al.* (2020) conducted a case study in the United Kingdom, highlighting the importance of effective leadership in universities characterized by vision, communication skills, and stakeholder engagement. Nevertheless, a research gap persists in the lack of specificity regarding the leadership behaviors and practices conducive to organizational management performance within universities.

Conceptual framework

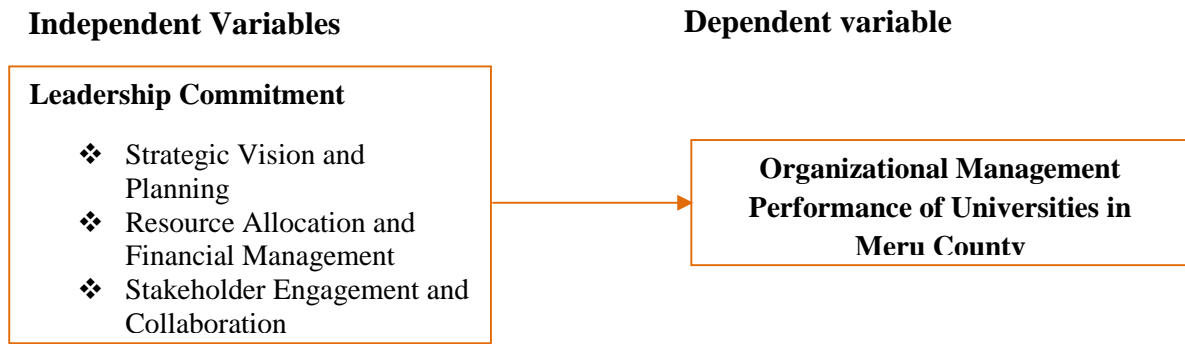


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
Source: Researcher (2024)

Research Methodology

The study employed a descriptive research design, focusing on quantifying the relationship between leadership commitment and organizational management performance in universities within Meru County. This design allowed for the systematic collection and analysis of quantitative data to describe the extent of leadership commitment and its impact on management performance. The target population included all 6 Universities located within Meru County. This encompasses both public and private universities operating in the region. The study aimed to capture the perspectives of university administrators, faculty members, and staff members who have direct experience with leadership practices and management performance within their respective institutions. The study included all 72 individuals from six universities: A/Nazarene, Meru, KeMU, Nairobi, Moi, and Mt Kenya. Each university contributed 2 administrators, 5 faculty members, and 5 staff members, totaling 12 administrators, 30 faculty members, and 30 staff members. This full population sampling aligns with Leedy's recommendation of sampling populations larger than 100 for validity. Quantitative data was collected through structured surveys administered to university administrators, faculty members, and

staff members. The survey instrument included standardized scales to measure leadership commitment and indicators of organizational management performance. The survey was distributed electronically or in person, depending on the preferences and accessibility of participants. Quantitative data analysis involves descriptive statistics, including measures of central tendency and variability, to summarize the collected data. Inferential statistics, such as correlation analysis and regression analysis, was used to examine the relationship between leadership commitment and organizational management performance. The findings were presented using tables, charts, and graphs to visually illustrate the key findings and patterns observed in the data.

Results

Response rate

The study surveyed 72 individuals from six universities from which a total of 69 questionnaires were received back, resulting in a response rate of 95.8% as shown in Table 1. This response rate is deemed satisfactory, as Creswell (2014) asserts that a response rate of over 50% is considered acceptable for a survey.

Table 1: Response Rate

	Number of Informants	Percent
Response Number	72	95.8
Non- Response Number	69	4.2
Total	110	100

Source: Researcher (2024)

A: Descriptive Findings

Descriptive findings refer to the results of data analysis that describe the characteristics of a sample or population under investigation.

B. Leadership Commitment on Organizational Management Performance

The objective of the study was to investigate how the influence of leadership commitment on organizational management performance of Universities in Meru County and the findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Leadership Commitment on Organizational Management Performance

Opinion	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The leadership of our university demonstrates a strong commitment to its mission and vision.	69	4.22	0.723
The university's leadership effectively communicates its goals and expectations to all stakeholders.	69	4.46	0.807
The leadership fosters a culture of trust, accountability, and transparency within the university.	69	3.88	1.254
The leadership actively seeks input and feedback from faculty and staff members in decision-making processes.	69	4.14	1.186
Our university's leadership demonstrates resilience and adaptability in addressing challenges and changes.	69	4.34	0.974
The leadership invests in professional development and growth opportunities for faculty and staff members.	69	4.12	0.823
I believe the leadership's commitment positively influences the organizational management performance of our university	69	4.01	0.893

Source: Researcher (2024)

The study findings, as shown in Table 2, revealed that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that the leadership of their university demonstrates a strong commitment to its mission and vision (Mean = 4.22, Std. Deviation = 0.723). Similarly, respondents indicated a high level of agreement regarding the effective communication of goals and expectations by the university's leadership (Mean = 4.46, Std. Deviation = 0.807). Additionally, there was strong agreement that the leadership actively seeks input and feedback from faculty and staff members in decision-making processes (Mean = 4.14, Std. Deviation = 1.186), and demonstrates resilience and adaptability in

addressing challenges and changes (Mean = 4.34, Std. Deviation = 0.974). However, there was a slightly lower level of agreement regarding the fostering of a culture of trust, accountability, and transparency within the university (Mean = 3.88, Std. Deviation = 1.254). Nevertheless, overall, respondents believed that leadership commitment positively influences the organizational management performance of their university (Mean = 4.01, Std. Deviation = 0.893). These findings underscore the importance of leadership commitment in fostering a conducive organizational environment for effective management performance.

C. Organizational Management Performance of Universities

The study sought to find out the Organizational Management Performance of Universities in Meru County. The results are as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Organizational Management Performance of Universities

Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Our university effectively utilizes its resources to achieve its goals and objectives.	69	4.43	0.943
The university's management implements efficient processes and systems to support academic and administrative operations.	69	4.3	1.083
The university demonstrates transparency and accountability in its decision-making processes and financial management.	69	4.16	0.953
Our university consistently evaluates and improves its academic programs and services to meet the needs of students and stakeholders.	69	3.53	1.492
The university fosters a supportive and inclusive environment for faculty, staff, and students	69	4.09	0.851

Source: Researcher (2024)

The study findings, as shown in Table 3, revealed that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that their university effectively utilizes its resources to achieve its goals and objectives (Mean = 4.43, Std. Deviation = 0.943). Similarly, respondents indicated a high level of agreement regarding the implementation of efficient processes and systems by the university's management to support academic and administrative operations (Mean = 4.3, Std. Deviation = 1.083). Additionally, there was strong agreement that the university fosters a supportive and inclusive environment for faculty, staff, and students (Mean = 4.09, Std. Deviation = 0.851). However, there was a slightly lower level of agreement regarding the university's consistent evaluation and improvement of academic programs and services to meet the needs of students and stakeholders (Mean = 3.53, Std. Deviation = 1.492). Nevertheless, overall,

respondents perceived a high level of organizational management performance within their university, particularly in resource utilization, efficient processes, and fostering a supportive environment.

Regression Analysis

ANOVA Analysis for the Overall Model

As shown in Table 3, the ANOVA analysis presents the influence of leadership commitment on organizational management performance of Universities in Meru County. The result of findings shows p-value of 0.000 which revealed to be less than 0.05. This indicated that the model was statistically significant in discussing the effect of leadership commitment on organizational management performance of Universities in Meru County.

Table 4: ANOVA^b for Leadership Commitment on Organizational Management Performance of Universities in Meru County.

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	19.871	3	5.745	63.778	.000 ^a
	Residual	8.772	65	0.052		
	Total	28.646	68			

a. predictors: Leadership Commitment
Source: Researcher (2024)

D: Model Summary

According to the model summary in Table 4, 72.6% of the variation in organizational management performance of Universities in Meru County can be explained by the independent

variable Leadership Commitment. The remaining 27.4% of the variation in organizational management performance of universities in Meru County cannot be explained by this variable and may be influenced by other factor.

Table 5: Model Summary for Leadership Commitment on Organizational Management Performance of Universities in Meru County

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.842	.726	.704	.2247

a. predictors: Leadership Commitment
Source: Researcher (2024)

Regression Coefficient for Organizational Management Performance of Universities in Meru County

Table 6: Regression Analysis Results for Organizational Management Performance of Universities in Meru County.

	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.860	2.93		2.912	.000
Leadership Commitment	.581	.321	.446	1.898	.001

Source: Researcher (2024)

As shown in Table 6, the standardized coefficients assess the contribution of Leadership Commitment towards the prediction of the organizational management performance of Universities in Meru County, since they have been converted in the same scale to show

comparison. The result indicates that Leadership Commitment having the beta of .0446 has the highest influence on organizational management performance of universities in Meru County. The t-test statistic shows that Leadership Commitment is significant since $p < 0.05$.

Conclusion of the study

The study concluded that leadership commitment significantly influences the organizational management performance of universities in Meru County. Through rigorous statistical analyses, including ANOVA and regression, it was determined that leadership commitment explains a substantial portion (72.6%) of the variation in management performance. Specifically, the findings highlight the significant positive impact of leadership commitment on various aspects of organizational management, such as resource utilization, efficient processes, and fostering a supportive environment. These results underscore the critical role of committed leadership in shaping the effectiveness and efficiency of university management practices. Consequently, the study emphasizes the importance of cultivating and sustaining strong leadership commitment within academic institutions to enhance overall organizational outcomes and effectiveness.

Recommendations of the study

The study recommended that Universities should prioritize fostering a culture of leadership commitment at all levels of the institution. This entails ensuring that leaders, from top administrators to department heads, demonstrate a strong dedication to the institution's mission and vision. This commitment should be reflected in their actions, decisions, and communication with stakeholders. Providing leadership training and development programs can help cultivate and reinforce these values among current and future leaders. Additionally, leaders should actively seek input and feedback from faculty, staff, and students, fostering a sense of inclusivity and accountability within the organization.

Establishing robust feedback mechanisms is crucial for continuously assessing and improving leadership commitment and organizational management performance. The study recommended that Universities should implement regular surveys, focus groups, and performance

evaluations to gather feedback from stakeholders regarding their perceptions of leadership commitment and its impact on management practices. This feedback should be used to identify areas for improvement and inform strategic decision-making processes. Moreover, creating channels for open and transparent communication between leaders and stakeholders can facilitate dialogue, trust-building, and collaboration, further reinforcing the commitment of leaders to the institution's success.

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