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Association between Supporting Style of Situational Leadership and Employee Performance in Public Universities in Kenya

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Abstract
The study examined the association between the supporting style of situational leadership and employee performance in public universities in Kenya. Guided by Situational Leadership Theory, the study adopted a positivist philosophy and descriptive correlational research design. The target population comprised 1,688 heads of departments and office administrators from 27 public universities in Kenya, from which a sample of 323 respondents was selected through stratified random sampling and simple random sampling. Data was collected using self-administered questionnaires and analysed using descriptive (means and standard deviations) and inferential (correlation analysis, chi-square tests, One-Way ANOVA, and ordinal logistic regression) statistics, using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 30. Correlation and Chi-square analyses were significant ($p < .001$), while regression analysis confirmed a good model fit, χ^2 (32) = 245.467, $p < .001 < .05$. The model fit yielded a strong Nagelkerke R^2 value of 0.696, denoting that supporting style of situational leadership had a modestly significant positive relationship with employee performance. This led to rejection of the null hypothesis (Supporting leadership style of situational leadership is not significantly associated with employee performance in public universities in Kenya). The study recommends institutionalising supportive leadership practices to improve employee performance in public universities in Kenya.

Introduction
Leaders influence workers to increase productivity and morale by making wise decisions, providing resources, mediating conflicts, and offering direction (Sari et al. 2021). With non-existent or ineffective leadership, an organisation tends to underperform on key indicators of organisational effectiveness (Baker & Murphy, 2022). Employee performance, according to Kadiyono et al. (2020), is the outcome of the quality and quantity of work that an employee accomplishes in line with his/her obligations and the tasks assigned to him/her. An organisation's success depends on having adaptable, competent leaders who can have a beneficial impact on workers and who enhance an employee's dedication to an organisation.

This study sought to investigate the association between supporting leadership style and employee performance in public universities in Kenya. Supportive leadership has developed historically through a variety of theories and practices. It became a recognised style that focuses on the leader's responsibility to create a positive environment for team members (De Oliveira Dias et al., 2022). According to research, mentoring is essential for fostering supportive leadership and helping people realise their potential (Rao et al., 2023). Furthermore, good results at the individual, group, and

organisational levels, such as enhanced attitudes and performance, are associated with supportive leadership (Dayanti et al., 2022). Bland et al. (2023) also posit that a supportive leadership style has a major impact on job satisfaction. Therefore, it is necessary for the leadership to take a more active role in motivating staff members through communication, attention, and rewards, as well as by fostering a team atmosphere at work and a sense of togetherness. According to Cheng and Osman (2023), supportive leadership philosophies significantly improve workers' job performance through various channels, including enhanced motivation, job satisfaction, and communication.

Existing literature on the supporting style of situational leadership and its relationship to employee performance demonstrates significant scholarly interest in this area. Mala et al. (2022) studied the impact of responsible and supportive leadership on the on-the-job performance of junior high school teachers and found that supportive leadership had a direct positive effect on job performance, a direct positive effect on responsibility, and a direct positive effect on learning culture. In support of a similar notion, Bahkia et al. (2020) found that a supportive situational leadership style fully mediates the relationship between occupational stress and work commitment. In support of the supportive leadership style, Olomi and Ikegwuru (2021) focused on the supply chain performance of retail SMEs and indicated that the supportive leadership style positively influenced order fulfilment, indicating a positive and significant influence of the supportive leadership style on supply chain performance. In addition, Diana et al. (2021) found the role of situational leadership style in predicting employee performance to be quite significant. However, Curral et al. (2023) contradicted these notions, citing that supportive leadership had no significant effect on subordinates' stress levels.

Theoretical review

Initially developed by Hersey and Blanchard (1969) based on Reddin's (1967) 3-D management style theory, Situational Leadership has evolved into a widely recognised leadership model, widely utilised in organisational leadership training and development. Since its creation, the model has undergone numerous improvements and updates, as evidenced by research conducted by Blanchard, Zigarmi, and Nelson (1993), Blanchard, Zigarmi, and Zigarmi (1985), and Hersey and Blanchard (1982). These improvements tackled both theoretical and practical constraints of the initial model, incorporating concerns highlighted with the Leadership Effectiveness and Adaptability (LEAD) tool (Graeff, 1983).

To overcome these constraints, Blanchard, Hambleton, Zigarmi, and Forsyth (1982) developed the Leader Behaviour Analysis (LBA) tool, which offered a more effective approach to evaluating leader behaviour in organisational settings. Soon after, Blanchard (1985a, 1985b, 1985c) released a collection of publications presenting Situational Leadership II (SLII®), a revised and enhanced iteration of the original theory. That same year, Blanchard et al. (1985) introduced an enhanced model focusing on real-world use in leadership training initiatives. The SLII® model embodies the current version of situational leadership, designed to equip leaders with a framework for adjusting their behaviour to the developmental needs of their team members.

The fundamental idea of situational leadership is that successful leadership demands flexibility to various scenarios. Leadership style is viewed on a spectrum that goes from directive to supportive actions. The ongoing development of situational leadership theory underscores its relevance to contemporary organisational challenges, especially in dynamic settings such as public universities, where staff effectiveness and speed are essential to the quality-of-service delivery. The theory's focus on adaptability and responsiveness offers a solid theoretical basis for exploring how leadership practices impact employee performance in various institutional settings

Conceptual Framework

This study was conceptualised around the constructs of the situational leadership supporting leadership style, with the independent variable measured by openness, the provision of a pleasant work environment, and the promotion of employee well-being as sub-constructs. Employee performance, the dependent variable, was measured by job satisfaction, self-efficacy and customer satisfaction. Figure 1 depicts this relationship.

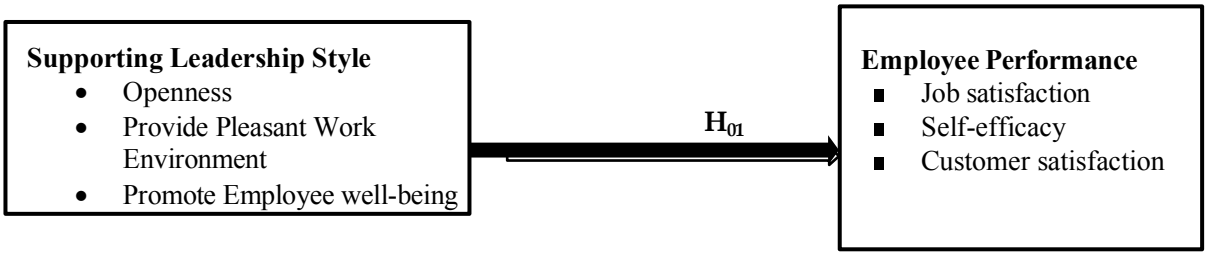

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Supporting Style and Employee Performance

Openness

Supportive leadership is characterised by positively impacting employees' readiness to share ideas and collaborate as a team. By cultivating a supportive atmosphere that encourages social interactions and builds social capital, leaders can improve follower effectiveness and organisational outcomes (Mokgwane, 2021). Moreover, since companies with transparent processes generally outperform their more opaque rivals, corporate governance transparency is linked to improved performance indicators such as customer satisfaction and employee productivity (Thanigaimani & Reddy, 2024). Barnová et al. (2022) conducted a study on leadership styles, organisational climate, and the openness of school climate in vocational schools as perceived by teachers in Slovakia, revealing varied results. Data were gathered in a Slovak educational setting from 474 vocational school teachers to assess five dimensions: teacher engagement, teacher frustration, directive principal behaviour, supportive principal behaviour, and close teacher behaviour. The study's results validated the links between the behaviours of teachers and principals and the openness of the school climate, indicating that the leadership style utilised in a school can influence the quality of interpersonal relationships and teacher behaviour, positively or negatively.

Provide a pleasant work environment

A pleasant work environment encompasses various factors that influence overall satisfaction and efficiency, both of which are crucial for enhancing employee performance. Dullah et al. (2023) state that safe, well-lit, and clean workplaces promote comfort and reduce stress, thereby enhancing productivity. This aligns with Lavanya & Meti (2023), who argue that careful office design and ergonomic factors can enhance employee well-being and efficiency. Al Sabei et al. (2020) evaluated nurses' work settings, exploring the relationships among the nursing work environment, intentions to leave, job burnout, and the quality of care provided in Muscat, Oman. Data were collected from 207 nurses employed at a public hospital via an electronic survey in this cross-sectional research design study. Findings revealed that a favourable working environment was associated with less turnover intention.

Promote Employee Well-being

Supportive leaders play a crucial role in enhancing employee well-being through multiple approaches. Clarke et al. (2024) suggest that leadership actions influence psychological safety, which in turn affects overall well-being, job satisfaction, and employee performance. Alhassan (2023) examined situational leadership within Ghanaian small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) hotels. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and data extraction from 10 SME hotels in Ghana. An inductive approach was used to gather insights into the leadership philosophies and strategies employed by Ghanaian SME hotel leaders to enhance their employees' competency growth within various situational leadership frameworks. The supportive style behaviours examined included on-the-job training, in-person conversations, aligning employees' interests with their roles, and providing social and financial assistance. The findings indicated that leaders who employed supportive behaviours enhanced employee well-being and increased employee competence, ultimately leading to better service delivery.

Methodology

Study Design

This research utilised the descriptive correlational study design for several reasons. One, the study gathered quantitative data to investigate the extent of the relationship between situational leadership's supporting style and employee performance, without altering either variable. Creswell (2022) indicated that a correlational design is suitable when one or two predictors are correlated, and, in this study, supporting leadership style and employee performance were examined to determine whether a correlation exists and, if so, its degree. Ochieng et al. (2023), Nyutu et al. (2021), and Anggarista & Wahyudin (2022) utilised this research approach in their investigations.

Study Site

The study was conducted in Kenya, targeting 27 listed public universities namely Chuka University, Dedan Kimathi University, Egerton University, Jaramogi Oginga-Odinga University of Science & Technology, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture & Technology, Karatina University, Kenyatta University, Kibabii University, Kirinyaga University, Laikipia University, Kisii University, Machakos University, Meru University of Science & Technology, Moi University, Multimedia University of Kenya, Murang'a University of Technology, Pwani University, Rongo University, Southeastern Kenya University, Taita Taveta University, Technical University of Kenya, The University of Nairobi, The Cooperative University of Kenya, Technical University of Mombasa, University of Eldoret, University of Embu, and University of Kabianga.

Sampling and Sample Size

The sampling frame for the study relied on information from the Commission for University Education (CUE), which provided aggregate staff statistics for public universities across Kenya. Data specific to the strata of interest, including department heads and office administrators, were acquired directly from the universities involved. This study's population included 27 public universities, encompassing 1,119 heads of department and 569 office administrators, totalling 1,688 employees, from which the sample was extracted. To achieve the study goals, both stratified and simple random sampling methods were utilised. Stratified random sampling was employed as the population was segmented into two separate strata, guaranteeing that all pertinent groups were included and that the sample truly mirrored the population. The Yamane (1967) formula was utilised to calculate a sample size of 323 individuals. After stratification, simple random sampling was conducted within each stratum, giving every individual an equal and independent chance of selection, thereby improving the sample's representativeness and reliability. Table 1 below shows the target population.

Table 1: Population Distribution

S. no.	Organisation	Employees		%
		Heads of department	Office administrators	
1.	Chuka University	23	13	3
2.	Dedan Kimathi University of Technology	21	12	3
3.	Egerton University	60	30	5
4.	Jaramogi Oginga-Odinga University of Science & Technology	23	13	3
5.	Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture & Technology	105	54	8
6.	Karatina University	16	9	3
7.	Kenyatta University	103	42	8
8.	Kibabii University	18	10	2
9.	Kirinyaga University	10	6	3
10.	Laikipia University	23	13	3
11.	Kisii University	21	12	3
12.	Machakos University	22	12	3
13.	Meru University of Science & Technology	16	9	3
14.	Moi University	104	54	8
15.	Multimedia University of Kenya	17	10	3
16.	Murang'a University of Technology	13	7	3
17.	Pwani University	14	8	2
18.	Rongo University	17	9	2
19.	Southeastern Kenya University	19	10	3
20.	Taita Taveta University	10	5	3
21.	Technical University of Kenya	47	21	4
22.	The Cooperative University of Kenya	12	7	3
23.	University of Eldoret	48	27	3
24.	University of Embu	18	10	3
25.	University of Kabianga	18	12	2
26.	University of Nairobi	153	65	8
27.	Technical University of Mombasa	17	9	3
	TOTAL	**1,119**	**569**	**100**

Data Collection

Data for this research were collected through self-administered questionnaires completed by the participants. The questionnaires were distributed to participants in three formats: physical copies, soft copies, and online surveys. Of the 323 questionnaires distributed, 194 were received online and 56 via physical forms, for a total of 250 responses. The tool included several multiple-choice questions, with answers assessed using a five-point Likert scale to gauge the level of agreement or disagreement with the given statements. This method enabled the measurement of views on supporting leadership style and employee performance. Harman's single-factor test was used to assess common method variance, as the same instrument was used to assess both the dependent and independent variables (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Table 2 shows the total variance explained.

Table 2: Total Variance Explained

Total Variance Explained

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.985	56.928	56.928	3.496	49.943	49.943
2	.763	10.896	67.824			
3	.601	8.593	76.417			
4	.520	7.431	83.848			
5	.453	6.474	90.321			
6	.387	5.525	95.846			
7	.291	4.154	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

The Total Variance Explained Table indicates that common method bias was not a significant issue in this research. This understanding relies on Harman's single-factor test, in which common method bias is evaluated by checking for the emergence of a single factor and determining if that factor explains the majority of the variance in the dataset. In this analysis, the initial factor accounts for 49.943% of the total variance after extraction, which is below the accepted threshold of 50%. While one primary factor emerged, it accounts for less than half of the overall variance. Consequently, the findings suggest that common method bias is absent in the dataset, suggesting that the connections between the study variables are not greatly exaggerated due to the reliance on a single method or source for data collection.

A pilot test of 10% of the calculated sample of 323 participants was conducted before full data collection in line with Bryman and Bell's (2022) recommendation. During pilot testing, the instrument's reliability and validity were assessed, and requisite modifications were made to the questionnaire based on the results obtained. A Cronbach's alpha of 0.889 > 0.7 was obtained, indicating reliability. A high KMO value of 0.920 > 0.5 and a statistically significant value for Bartlett's Test (p = <.001≤.05) proved good construct validity and that the variables were highly correlated to support factor analysis.

Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the relevant entities, including the USIU Institutional Ethics Review Committee (IERC) and the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI), in compliance with the Science and Technology Act, Chapter 250, Laws of Kenya. Letters of authorisation were obtained from each participating university to permit data collection. Ethical standards were rigorously maintained throughout the research process, including explaining the purpose of the research to participants, ensuring confidentiality and protection from potential risks, and granting participants the opportunity to ask questions or withdraw from participation at any time, if they so wished.

The total variance was explained to ascertain the contribution of supporting leadership style. The results in Table 3 below indicate that the factors for supporting style retained eigenvalues >1 and were therefore retained, as the Kaiser Criterion suggests retaining only factors with an eigenvalue >1 (Kaiser, 1960).

Table 3: Total Variance Explained Results for Supporting Style

Variable	Eigen Values
Supporting Style	5.638

Kaiser Criterion – retain only factors with an eigenvalue >1

Factor analysis was also performed on all the statements. The majority of the items were adequately represented by the extracted factors. In the social sciences, communalities greater than 0.60 are typically considered acceptable (Shrestha, 2021), while those exceeding 0.80 indicate exceptionally strong representation. Table 4 below presents the factor analysis findings, illustrating that the leadership styles were significantly organised into clusters based on underlying themes, with communalities suggesting that the extracted factors were pertinent and vital for evaluating leadership perceptions in the data.

Table 4: Factor Analysis for Supporting Style

Communalities	Initial	Extraction
Supporting Style	1.000	.913

Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software Version 30 was utilised for coding and analysing the data. Once data collection concluded, each questionnaire was assigned a unique identifier based on the study's variables. A platform for initial data analysis was established by entering data into ordinal, nominal, and scale variables. Diagnostic tests for normality and multicollinearity were employed in data preparation. To assess normality, the research depicted normal curves and observed that these curves showed no skewness in either direction, that the data points were spread across the normal probability plot, and that the residuals, when graphed against the expected values, were evenly and randomly distributed along the line of best fit. An evaluation of the applied model confirmed the OLS model's assumption of homoscedasticity and heteroscedasticity. To assess multicollinearity, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was utilised, with VIF values between 1 and 10 indicating the absence of multicollinearity (Tsagris & Pandis, 2021). Table 5 below indicates that the VIF values fell within the specified range.

Table 5: Multicollinearity Test

Model	Tolerance	VIF
My leader encourages open dialogue that enhances my satisfaction and productivity at work.	0.530	1.53662
My leader addresses workplace stress and discomfort in ways that improve my productivity.	0.333	1.31452
My leader encourages work-life balance, which improves my work performance and job satisfaction.	0.491	1.49853
My leader supports my well-being in a manner that helps me focus better on my tasks and succeed in them.	0.409	1.48738
My leader occasionally interacts with me in a relaxed way, which increases my confidence in my work performance.	0.366	1.54192
My leader provides a pleasant work environment that motivates me to take initiative and believe in my success at work.	0.350	1.56695
My leader is open to my input and feedback, enabling me to meet customer expectations more effectively.	0.380	1.52863
My leader promotes a positive work environment that helps me perform my tasks effectively and serve customers better.	0.356	1.32522

The tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) metrics were utilised to evaluate multicollinearity among the independent variables. The tolerance values varied from .333 to .530, all exceeding the suggested minimum threshold of .10, showing that the predictors do not exhibit high correlation with each other. Likewise, the VIF values ranged from 1.887 to 3.002, all below the accepted threshold of 10, indicating no multicollinearity and that the predictor variables each play a unique role in explaining the dependent variable.

Results

A total of 323 questionnaires were disseminated in three forms: physical copies, soft copies, and an online survey via Google Forms. 250 were returned duly filled, while 73 were not returned, representing a 77% response rate.

Descriptive Statistics

Three distinct groups of questions were created, with participants showing their level of agreement, disagreement, or neutrality regarding the various questions on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree, where one represented the lowest score while 5 represented the highest score. The three categories focused on openness, providing a pleasant work environment and promoting employee well-being, and on how these were associated with employee performance indicators, job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and customer satisfaction. Statistical tests for means and standard deviations were performed and are shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics for Supporting Style

	N	Mean	SD
My leader encourages open dialogue that enhances my satisfaction and productivity at work.	250	3.0320	1.49932
My leader addresses workplace stress and discomfort in ways that improve my productivity.	250	2.9840	1.53662
My leader encourages work-life balance, which improves my work performance and job satisfaction.	250	3.1240	1.49853
My leader supports my well-being in a manner that helps me focus better on my tasks and succeed in them.	250	3.1120	1.48738
My leader occasionally interacts with me in a relaxed way, which increases my confidence in my work performance.	250	3.0000	1.54192
My leader provides a pleasant work environment that motivates me to take initiative and believe in my success at work.	250	3.1360	1.56695
My leader is open to my input and feedback, enabling me to meet customer expectations more effectively.	250	3.0680	1.52863
My leader promotes a positive work environment that helps me perform my tasks effectively and serve customers better.	250	2.8960	1.32522
My leader shows concern for my mental health and well-being, which enables me to achieve better work results.	250	3.0960	1.49389

Inferential Statistics

Correlation analysis, Chi-square, One-way ANOVA and Ordinal Regression Analysis were performed.

Correlation Analysis

All correlations were significant at the $p < .05$ level (2-tailed test) as indicated in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Pearson Correlations between Supporting Style and Employee Performance

Supporting Leadership Variable	Employee performance	
	r	*p*
Openness	.626	< .001
Provide Pleasant work environment	.573	< .001
Promote Employee Well-being	.560	< .001

p-value (< 0.05) means a statistically significant correlation, (N = 250)

Chi-Square Test

A Chi-Square Test was performed to investigate whether a relationship exists between a supportive leadership style and employee performance. Table 8 below shows a highly significant association between the two variables, as demonstrated by the low p-value.

Table 8: Chi-Square Test for Supporting Style and Employee Performance

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic *p* (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	152.797[a]	16	<.001
Likelihood Ratio	137.543	16	<.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	70.087	1	<.001

One-Way ANOVA

A one-way ANOVA test was performed to ascertain whether significant differences existed among the means of support style and the demographic factors of length of service and highest academic qualification in public universities. Table 9 below shows results demonstrating that the mean differences were not significant (p > .05).

Table 9: One-Way ANOVA Test for Supporting Style and Demographic Variables

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	*p*
Job Category	Between Groups	3.509	4	.877	1.768	.136
	Within Groups	121.547	245	.496		
	Total	125.056	249			
Length of service	Between Groups	3.857	4	.964	1.279	.279
	Within Groups	184.707	245	.754		
	Total	188.564	249			
Highest Academic Qualification	Between Groups	2.505	4	.626	.916	.455
	Within Groups	167.595	245	.684		
	Total	170.100	249			

Regression Analysis

The ordinal logistic regression model was employed to assess whether the situational leadership supporting style is associated with employee performance in public universities in Kenya. First, the Test of Parallel lines was conducted, as shown in Table 10 below.

Table 10: Test for Parallel Lines for Supporting Style and Employee Performance

Test of Parallel Lines[a]

Model	-2 Log-Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Null Hypothesis	284.316			
General	185.717[b]	98.599[c]	96	.408

The null hypothesis states that the location parameters (slope coefficients) are the same across response categories.

a. Link function: Logit.

Assumption for Proportional Odds

The study used the Parallel Lines Test to assess this assumption. As Table 10 above displays, the findings indicate that the overall model yielded a Chi-square statistic of 98.599 with 96 degrees of freedom and a significance level of p = .408, indicating that the proportional odds assumption was not violated and therefore the ordinal logistic regression model was appropriate for the data. The results indicate that the correlation between the predictor variables and the dependent variable stays steady across the various outcome categories.

Goodness-of-fit

The goodness-of-fit was also assessed to determine whether the model adequately fit the data. The test employed the Pearson Chi-Square statistic to determine whether the data aligned with the fitted model. If ($p \geq .05$), the test outcomes are non-significant, and the model adequately represents the data, providing justification to reject the null hypothesis. Conversely, if ($p \leq .05$), the test findings are significant, providing grounds for not rejecting the null hypothesis. The goodness-of-fit outcomes reveal a conflicting trend. The Pearson chi-square test indicates statistical significance ($\chi^2 = 10676.602$, df = 576, $p < .001$), suggesting that the model may not align well with the data. Nonetheless, the Deviance statistic is not significant ($\chi^2 = 263.742$, df = 576, p = 1.000), suggesting no indication of poor fit. In practice, the Deviance statistic is often considered more reliable for ordinal logistic regression. According to this outcome, the model aligns well with the data. The differing results between the Pearson and Deviance tests might indicate a sensitivity to sparse data. Table 11 illustrates the goodness of fit for the supporting style.

Table 11: Goodness-of-fit for Supporting Style and Employee Performance

Goodness-of-Fit

	Chi-Square	df	Sig
Pearson	10676.602	576	<.001
Deviance	263.742	576	1.000

Pseudo R-Square

Pseudo R-Square determined the coefficient of determination by comparing the log-likelihood of the regression model to that of the baseline models. Nagelkerke values generally range from 0 to 1, where higher values indicate a better model fit and lower values indicate a weaker association. Table 12 below shows the model fit yields a strong Nagelkerke R-squared value of 0.696, indicating that a strong relationship exists between the two variables, the supporting style of situational leadership and employee performance.

Table 12: Pseudo R-Square for Supporting Style and Employee Performance

Pseudo R-Square	
Cox and Snell	.625
Nagelkerke	.696
McFadden	.430

Model Fitting Information for Supporting Style on Employee Performance

The model fitting results indicate that the final model with predictors fits the data significantly better than the intercept-only model ($\chi^2 = 245.467$, df = 32, $p < .001$). This shows that the included variables meaningfully improve model performance and provide useful explanatory power, suggesting the model is appropriate for predicting the supporting style of situational leadership, as Table 13 below demonstrates.

Table 13: Model Fitting for Supporting Style and Employee Performance

Model Fitting Information				
Model	-2 Log-Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	*p*
Intercept-Only	529.783			
Final	284.316	245.467	32	<.001

Parameter Estimates

The ordinal logistic regression results presented in Table 14 indicate that several threshold parameters are statistically significant ($p < .05$), confirming clear distinctions among the ordered categories of the dependent variable. The findings further reveal that leaders' openness, a pleasant work environment, and the promotion of employee well-being significantly influence employee performance. The negative coefficients associated with these predictors suggest that lower levels of these leadership and workplace support factors reduce the likelihood of achieving higher levels of employee performance. These results demonstrate that supportive leadership practices, particularly openness, employee well-being, and a positive work environment, play an important role in influencing employee outcomes. However, some related indicators of these variables were not statistically significant ($p > .05$), implying that not all aspects of supportive leadership independently predict employee performance in the model. In addition, the confidence intervals for significant predictors excluded zero, confirming their statistical significance, whereas the intervals for non-significant predictors included zero, indicating uncertainty regarding their effects. Overall, the results suggest that only specific dimensions of supportive leadership meaningfully contribute to improved employee performance.

Table 14: Parameter Estimates for Supporting Style and Employee Performance

Parameter Estimates

		Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval Upper Bound
Threshold	[S4opennessQ1 = 1.00]	-8.109	.945	73.603	1	<.001	-9.961	-6.256
	[S4opennessQ1 = 2.00]	-8.034	.944	72.461	1	<.001	-9.883	-6.184
	[S4opennessQ1 = 3.00]	-7.513	.934	64.675	1	<.001	-9.343	-5.682
	[S4opennessQ1 = 4.00]	-1.481	.556	7.103	1	.008	-2.570	-.392
Location	[S4opennessQ2=1.00]	-3.916	.947	17.098	1	<.001	-5.773	-2.060
	[S4opennessQ2=2.00]	1.073	2.171	.244	1	.621	-3.181	5.327
	[S4opennessQ2=3.00]	-3.545	1.511	5.506	1	.019	-6.505	-.584
	[S4opennessQ2=4.00]	-2.136	.845	6.384	1	.012	-3.793	-.479
	[S4opennessQ2=5.00]	0[a]	.	.	0	.	.	.
	[S4opennessQ3=1.00]	-1.384	.945	2.144	1	.143	-3.235	.468
	[S4opennessQ3=2.00]	-18.373	9100.963	.000	1	.998	-17855.932	17819.187
	[S4opennessQ3=3.00]	-.789	1.096	.518	1	.472	-2.936	1.358
	[S4opennessQ3=4.00]	.156	.872	.032	1	.858	-1.553	1.864
	[S4opennessQ3=5.00]	0[a]	.	.	0	.	.	.
	[S4pleasant_work_envtQ4 =1.00]	.851	1.126	.572	1	.450	-1.356	3.058
	[S4pleasant_work_envtQ4 =2.00]	-.933	2.755	.115	1	.735	-6.333	4.467
	[S4pleasant_work_envtQ4 =3.00]	.187	1.016	.034	1	.854	-1.804	2.179
	[S4pleasant_work_envtQ4 =4.00]	.638	.912	.488	1	.485	-1.151	2.426
	[S4pleasant_work_envtQ4 =5.00]	0[a]	.	.	0	.	.	.
	[S4pleasant_work_envtQ5 =1.00]	-2.211	1.013	4.760	1	.029	-4.197	-.225
	[S4pleasant_work_envtQ5 =2.00]	-23.701	.000	.	1	.	-23.701	-23.701
	[S4pleasant_work_envtQ5 =3.00]	-3.055	1.835	2.773	1	.096	-6.651	.541
	[S4pleasant_work_envtQ5 =4.00]	-2.216	.911	5.921	1	.015	-4.001	-.431
	[S4pleasant_work_envtQ5 =5.00]	0[a]	.	.	0	.	.	.
	[S4pleasant_work_envtQ6 =1.00]	1.877	.981	3.664	1	.056	-.045	3.800
	[S4pleasant_work_envtQ6 =2.00]	3.073	2.713	1.283	1	.257	-2.244	8.390
	[S4pleasant_work_envtQ6 =3.00]	.736	1.118	.434	1	.510	-1.454	2.927
	[S4pleasant_work_envtQ6 =4.00]	1.234	.881	1.962	1	.161	-.492	2.960
	[S4pleasant_work_envtQ6 =5.00]	0[a]	.	.	0	.	.	.
	[S4employee_wellbeingQ7 =1.00]	-1.665	1.119	2.212	1	.137	-3.859	.529
	[S4employee_wellbeingQ7 =2.00]	-2.419	2.136	1.282	1	.257	-6.605	1.768
	[S4employee_wellbeingQ7 =3.00]	-2.147	1.250	2.952	1	.086	-4.597	.302
	[S4employee_wellbeingQ7 =4.00]	-.955	1.037	.847	1	.357	-2.988	1.078
	[S4employee_wellbeingQ7 =5.00]	0[a]	.	.	0	.	.	.
	[S4employee_wellbeingQ8 =1.00]	-.197	1.128	.030	1	.862	-2.407	2.014
	[S4employee_wellbeingQ8 =2.00]	2.789	1.754	2.530	1	.112	-.648	6.227
	[S4employee_wellbeingQ8 =3.00]	.777	1.264	.378	1	.539	-1.701	3.255
	[S4employee_wellbeingQ8 =4.00]	.285	1.010	.080	1	.777	-1.693	2.264
	[S4employee_wellbeingQ8 =5.00]	0[a]	.	.	0	.	.	.
	[S4employee_wellbeingQ9 =1.00]	-3.401	.990	11.803	1	<.001	-5.342	-1.461
	[S4employee_wellbeingQ9 =2.00]	-2.488	2.661	.875	1	.350	-7.703	2.726
	[S4employee_wellbeingQ9 =3.00]	-2.352	1.095	4.616	1	.032	-4.498	-.206
	[S4employee_wellbeingQ9 =4.00]	-1.746	.859	4.137	1	.042	-3.429	-.064
	[S4employee_wellbeingQ9 =5.00]	0[a]	.	.	0	.	.	.

Link function: Logit.
a. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.

Discussion

This research aimed to examine the association between the supporting style of situational leadership and employee performance in public universities in Kenya. Pearson correlation analysis revealed that all correlations were positive and moderately significant, indicating that the supporting style had a positive, modestly significant association with employee performance. A similar study by Alhassan (2023), examining situational leadership in Ghanaian small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) hotels, revealed that leaders employing supportive behaviours enhanced employee skills, leading to improved service delivery

The Chi-square findings from this research showed a statistically significant association between the situational leadership supporting style and employee performance. Supporting the results of this study was research by Barnová et al. (2022) on leadership styles, organisational climate, and the openness of school climate in vocational schools as experienced by teachers in Slovakia. The study's findings indicated that the leadership style employed in an institution can influence the quality of

interpersonal relationships in both positive and negative ways, with a positive correlation discovered between school climate openness and the characteristics of engaged teacher behaviour.

The results of the ordinal logistic regression (Nagelkerke Pseudo R-Square) in this study accounted for a significant average percentage of variance in the association between the supporting style of situational leadership and employee performance. In congruence with these findings were the results from Martinussen and Davidsen (2021), who carried out research in the Norwegian hospital sector, contrasting the conventional profession-based leadership style with a professional-supportive leadership style that embodies the developing management philosophy. The findings of the research revealed a favourable association between leadership style and organisational climate, with a professional-supportive leadership style linked to improved social climate, innovation, engagement, and enhanced workplace performance.

Average scores for leadership support were obtained, around 3 on a 5-point Likert scale, indicating moderate agreement with the examined statements and a positive endorsement of the connection between employee performance metrics and the elements of support, transparency, promotion of a positive work environment, and employee well-being. Consistent with these findings was a study by Arko (2020) that examined how supportive leadership affects performance via job satisfaction as a mediator, identifying employee well-being as an important factor in job satisfaction among staff at Hotel X Sidoarjo. The research found a positive association between supportive leadership and job satisfaction, with job satisfaction positively mediating the relationship between leadership and work performance.

Limitations

This research examined the impact of situational leadership on employee performance in public universities across Kenya. Additional research could be conducted at private universities to compare the results. The research confined its respondents to a specific group, namely office administrators and department heads; therefore, future investigators might consider broadening the scope to include all university employees for a wider range of perspectives. Additionally, the cross-sectional design precludes causal inference; therefore, a different design could be adopted. Also, follower readiness, a core contingency of Situational Leadership Theory, was not measured; this could be studied by future researchers.

Conclusion

The results on supportive styles indicated varied views across the various facets of supporting leadership style. The responses indicated that a positive workplace was associated with initiative and leader backing for well-being and work-life balance, resulting in improved focus and performance. This implied that these were key factors for employee effectiveness and engagement. There was also moderate agreement that leaders' willingness to accept feedback and input, along with transparent communication, enhanced performance. However, despite moderate agreement across the facets investigated, notable differences in employee perceptions emerged, highlighting that a "one-size-fits-all" leadership approach might not suffice and underscoring the importance of individual perspectives.

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