

# EFFECT OF CONTEMPORARY LEADERSHIP ON THE PERFORMANCE OF COUNTY GOVERNMENT IN KENYA, CASE STUDY OF MACHAKOS COUNTY GOVERNMENT

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of leadership on performance on County government in Kenya. The specific objectives were: to establish the effect of contemporary leadership styles, skills and ethics on performance of county government in Kenya. The study was undertaken at Machakos County government. The target population therefore comprised of 100 respondents. The study adopted descriptive research design. A sample of 60 respondents was drawn from the target population using stratified random. The study used stratified random sampling technique to select the sample. The study grouped the population into strata. From each stratum the study used simple random sampling to select respondents. The researcher used both secondary data as well as questionnaires as the research instrument to gather the relevant information needed related to the study. The questionnaires was both open and closed ended to respondents thus was not limited to give their opinion regarding the study at hand. The questionnaire was divided into two parts.. Quantitative research was used to provide numerical measurement and analysis of the medical insurance dynamic. Survey questionnaires was used for standardization purposes to allow for aggregation of the results. A structured questionnaire was administered on the sampled respondents. The questionnaire was pilot tested to authenticate its reliability and validity before it was administered in the final study.

**Keywords:** leadership, County government and Ethics.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Leaders in organizations mediate and reconcile the often-conflicting expectations of constituents, lack direct hierarchical and reward power and have resource dependence and shifting expectations. Organizational leaders derive power from the fact that they are in control of critical resources and are able to dispense them to internal stakeholders in their organizations. This means that they are able to direct internal stakeholders to act in accordance with organizational goals. The extent a leader is successful may depend on their ability to build trust between the parties and create opportunities for each party to fulfill both their individual and collective goals. This requires that such leaders are resourceful and tactful, relying on their personal qualities to assure effective performance in their leadership roles. Leadership processes define, establish, identify, or translate this direction for their followers and facilitate or enable the organizational processes with the aim of achieving the organizational purpose. Organizational purpose and direction can be defined in terms of mission, vision, strategy, goals, plans, and tasks. Leadership is tied to the continual development and attainment of organizational goal

**Statement of the problem:**

Achievement of excellent performance to a large extent depends on organizations leadership. County government leaders play a key role in achieving exemplary performance. All organizations is currently undergoing some type of change. Many of these change programs arise from organized management strategies such as culture change, business process reengineering, empowerment and total quality management. Other change initiatives are driven by the need for organizations to reposition themselves in the face of changing competitive conditions. Performance in county government of Machakos has been dismal for some years unlike the era of Masaku county council. Strategic change often involves radical transitions within an organization and encompasses strategy, structure, systems, processes and culture, (Drucker, 2004).

The track record of success in bringing about strategic change within most county government has been poor since many fail to grasp that they are performing an implementation which actually means turning plans into reality rather than formulation, (John and Scholes, 2003).The various attempts to improve on performance in county government have resulted in various effects in the desired ends. Counties have designed unique approaches and strategies to achieve the desired high performance. However, despite the efforts by counties to employ new approaches and strategies the efforts have not always led to the expected results in their performance. National leaders and the general public have time and again expressed concern over factors that influence county government' leaders in delivering excellent services to the wananchi. The most outstanding factor has to do with the organizational management of counties. For instance Grant, (2010), note that to improve the service of wananchi leaders are required first to improve the management of counties.

A number of studies have been done in the area of leadership. However, the literature on leadership and performance has concentrated on leadership and employee satisfaction, participative leadership style on job satisfaction, link between diversity and firm performance, female style in corporate leadership and managerial style on firm policies (Gordon, 2008; Bertrand et al. 2003; Belonia, 2012; Hamidifar, 2009; Warrick, 1981; Wright & Stepp, 2006; Matsa & Miller, 2011). Significantly, many of the studies concentrated on a single leader either the CEO, General Manager or Supervisor but organizational effectiveness depends on multiple leadership contributions, (Reilly et al. 2009). From the authors observations there are no empirical Kenyan based findings on the predictive relationship between leadership and performance of County government. Fenwick and Gayle (2008), in their study of the missing links in understanding the relationship between leadership and organizational performance conclude that despite a hypothesized leadership-performance relationship suggested by some researchers, current findings are inconclusive and difficult to interpret. Therefore it is against that background that the study aimed at finding out the effect of contemporary leadership on performance and establishing the effects of leadership style, leadership skills and leadership ethics on performance of county government in Kenya.

**Objectives:**

1. To assess the effect of contemporary leadership styles on the performance of county government in Kenya
2. To examine how leadership skills affect the performance of county government in Kenya
3. To determine the effect of leadership ethics on the county government in Kenya

**2. THEORETICAL REVIEW****Traditional Theories of Leadership:**

Leadership is a subject that has been around for a long time. Due to the attention given to leadership, many theories have developed overtime in order to form a basis for predicting an individual's chances of successfully leading any organization. With new research, traditional theories have been replaced by "contemporary" theories. The traditional leadership theories highlights three major leadership traits, the first focusing on the characteristics of a great leader, the second on the behavior of the leader, and the third on the situation in which the leader was required , (Horner 2007). These theories are discussed below.

**Traits Model of Leadership:**

The earlier theory was that of Bernard (2006) in Hellriegel, Jackson & Slocum (2007) that was based on inherent physical, social and personal characteristics that was observed in leaders and believed to presage success in guiding the fortunes of the endeavor being undertaken. The theory is useful in identifying the common – sense leadership attributes.

The model however was based on a limited number of perceived characteristics. It furthermore failed to give appropriate recognition to the situation, environmental and organizational context in which the particular individual was considered to be an effective leader, (Horner, 2007).

#### Behavioral Models of Leadership:

The obvious shortcomings of the traits theory of leadership led researchers to isolate the behaviors that are characteristic of leaders, (Hellreigel, 2011). Behavioral leadership models placed more emphasis on a more outward looking approach to effective leadership. By studying what these individuals actually did, said, or thought, a number of models were developed in the expectations that effective leadership behaviors could be identified and learned. McGregor's theory X and Theory Y was based on certain key assumptions made by leaders about their subordinates, which outlook affected their leadership behavior. Effective leadership was found to be more likely in individuals who had positive views of the motives, abilities and attitudes of subordinates. The Ohio University and University of Michigan models respectively identified considerate, as opposed to initiating structure, leadership styles and production centered versus employee centered approaches. These models recognized effective leaders as being those who developed supportive relationships with their subordinates. The managerial Grid model of Blake, Shepard and Mouton identified and plotted 5 leadership styles that combined different propositions of people – orientation, and found that this individual (compared with those who were considered more process – oriented) exhibited greater levels of effective leadership, (Ryan and Tipu, 2013),

#### Contingency Models of Leadership:

This is the third set of traditional theories that focused on individual leader's response to various situational factors, (Hellreigel 2011). Fielder's contingency model postulated that successful leaders matched their individual style to the demands of the situation. Hersey and Blalchard's situational leadership model expanded on this concept and emphasized that successful leaders had the flexibility to adapt to changing situations by being able to judge maturity levels of their subordinates. House's Path – Goal Model postulated that successful leaders were able to access the task and the employee characteristics inherent in the situation, and then utilize the appropriate style. Finally, Vroom and Jogo's leader – participation model formulated eight contingency questions and accessed successful leadership as their ability to correctly answer these questions and adapt to the style required by the situation, (Slocum ,2007)

#### Conceptual Framework:

A conceptual framework helps simplify the proposed relationships between the variables in the study and show the same graphically or diagrammatically, (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The conceptual framework of this study is based on three independent variables namely; Leadership styles, leadership skills as well as leadership ethics. The dependent variable of this study is the performance in County government. Figure 2.1 below shows how the various independent variables affect the dependent variable under study.

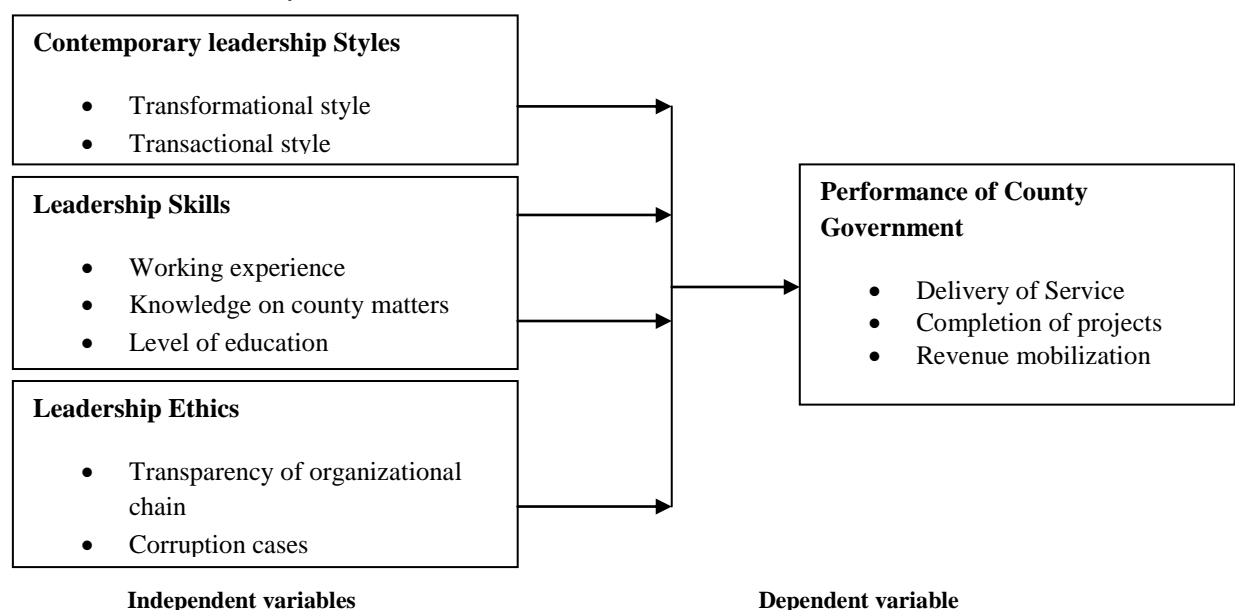


Fig 2.1 Conceptual framework

**Critique of Existing Literature:**

The critics argue that the existing literature was based on a limited number of perceived characteristics. They argue that it failed to give appropriate recognition to the situation, environmental and organizational context in which the particular individual was considered to be an effective leader. Furthermore they argue that the existing literature recognized effective leaders as being those who developed supportive relationships with their subordinates which is actually wrong. They argue that the effective leaders are those who contribute effectively to the inclusive economy. They argue that the effective leaders should advance equitable opportunities for county participants during economic growth with benefits incurred by every section of society, (Grant, 2010)

**Research gaps:**

The development of a transformational leadership theory owes much to the fact that many organizations have the past twenty five years had to face rapidly changing environments that required leaders to articulate new visions, foster new cultures, and breed new mindsets involving changes in basic values, beliefs and attitudes of subordinates. Shared leadership models, promoted in several studies of leadership within the sectors, provide a contrast with the assumption in much of the literature that leadership is linked to a role, and open up the possibility that several people within a centre/service may be involved in leadership. Louise Hard (2004) has proposed the concept of formal and informal leaders. All past leadership theories have a focus on certain behavior patterns and the implications of these patterns for leader performance. Researchers have yet to define the relationship between servant leadership and empowerment; empowerment is implied in the definition of the concept, as one of the primary objectives of servant leadership to develop the potential of followers. The precepts of servant leader idea is based on empathy, healing, listening and building community have enhanced meaning in today's business environment where more aggressive leadership or management styles focus on profit rather than people have ultimately led to system failures such as the current global financial crisis. In the past studies there still exists research gap on the effect of organizational leadership on academic performance in secondary schools in Kenya.

**3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research design used in this study was descriptive research design. The target population was specific employees of Machakos County Government. Thus the study targeted 200 employees of the county government of Machakos. The sample size of this study consisted of 60 individuals from county government of Machakos using a simple random sampling. The researcher used questionnaires as the research instrument to gather the relevant information needed related to the study.

**Model:**

Analysis of data used multiple regressions to test the research questions

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \epsilon$$

Where,

Y= Performance of County government

X1: Leadership styles

X2: Leadership skills

X3: Leadership ethics

Performance of County government was measured by delivery of services, completion of projects and revenue mobilization.

$\beta_0$  is the constant or intercept while  $\beta_1$ ,  $\beta_2$  and  $\beta_3$  are the corresponding coefficients for the respective independent variables.  $\epsilon$  is the error term which represents residual or disturbance factors or values that are not captured within the regression model. The interpretation of  $X$ ,  $\beta$  and  $\epsilon$  is the same for the subsequent equations for testing the other study objectives. Interpretations are as stated above.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

##### Leadership styles:

The study sought to establish the leadership styles employed by leaders in schools; the findings were as presented in Table 4.7 for respondent's response.

**Table 1: Leadership styles employed by leaders in County**

	1	2	3	4	5
Every leader in the County have a unique style they employ	50%	30%	10%	5%	5%
Leaders choose the style to employ based on the situation	70%	20%	10%	0%	0%
The leaders only employ leadership styles they found successful over time	50%	25%	5%	10%	10%
Leadership training helps me know the right style to employ in the County	60%	10%	15%	10%	5%
Leaders are not given room to exercise their preferred leadership styles	55%	20%	10%	5%	10%

The findings established that 80% of the teachers were of the opinion that every leader in County has the unique style they employ, 70% were of the statement that leadership training helps leaders to know the right styles they employ in the County, 90% were of the statement that leaders in the County choose the style to employ based on the situation, 75% said that leaders should employ only the leadership styles they have found successful over time while 75% said that it is difficult to identify leadership styles employed by leaders because they are not given to exercise their leadership styles.

##### Leadership skills:

The researcher sought to establish the leadership skills employed by leaders in County. The findings were as presented in Table 4.9 for teacher's response and Table 4.10 for respondent's response.

**Table 2: Leadership Skills employed by Leaders in County**

	1	2	3	4	5
Leaders have relevant years of experience in leadership positions	40%	20%	15%	5%	20%
Leaders are perceived skilled if they can influence the rest of the employees	30%	40%	5%	10%	15%
Leaders in your county got leadership skills through in-service training programs	20%	35%	20%	10%	15%
Leaders in your County are skillful because of their personal characteristics such as gender	25%	40%	10%	15%	10%
Leaders skills are evaluated through success of their leadership actions	30%	45%	10%	10%	5%

The findings established that 60% were of the statement that leaders in the County have relevant years of experience in leadership position, 75% said that skills of leaders in County are evaluated through success of leadership actions, 70% were of the statement that leaders are perceived skilled if they can influence the rest of the employees, 55% were of the opinion that leaders skills are created in the County settings through in-service training programmes while 65% were of the opinion that skills of most leaders in County depends on demographic factors such as gender.4.7

#### Leadership ethics:

The researcher sought to establish the leadership ethics employed by leaders in County. The findings were as presented in Table 4.

**Table 3: Leadership ethics employed by leaders in the County**

	1	2	3	4	5
Leaders in your County are ethical in practice of duty	60%	20%	10%	5%	5%
Leaders in your County consider ethics in leadership as part of County culture	30%	40%	5%	10%	15%
Top management care a lot whether the leaders are ethical or not	25%	40%	15%	5%	15%
Unethical leaders do not have much influence in the County	30%	20%	15%	15%	20%
Ethics in leadership is properly defined for leaders in the County government	25%	35%	20%	10%	10%

According to the findings, 80% were of the opinion that leaders are required to be ethical in practice of duty, 70% supported the opinion that ethics in leadership in the County is part of County's culture, 65% stated that top management care a lot whether the leaders are ethical or not, 60% agreed that ethics in leadership are properly defined for leaders in County while 50% were of the opinion that unethical leaders do not have much influence in the County. It is evident from the findings that leaders are required to be ethical in practice of duty

#### Regression results:

The study conducted regression analysis to examine the effect of contemporary leadership styles, leadership skills, and leadership ethics on performance of County government in Kenya. The results were as presented in Table 4.15.

**Table 4: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	STD error of the Estimate
1	0.87	0.140	0.112	0.575

The model summary indicated that 11.2 % of the data variation of the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables in the model (R Square= 0.112) while the regression model indicated that the regression model was significant to mean that the model had not been computed by chance.

**Table 5: Summary of One-Way ANOVA results**

Model		Sum of Square	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
1	Regression	4.480	2	1.320	4.50	0.0001
	Residual	25.88	80	0.30		
	Total	30.36	85			

The probability value of 0.0001 indicates that the regression relationship was highly significant in predicting how leadership styles, leadership skills and leadership ethics affected the performance of county government in Kenya. The F calculated at 5% level of significance was 4.50 since F calculated is greater than the F critical (value =2.5252), this shows that the overall model was significant.

**Table 6: Regression coefficients of the relationship between Performance County of government and the three predictive variables**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	Sig
1	(Constant)	2.300	0.500		4.80	0.000
	Leadership Styles	0.025	0.120	0.025	0.240	0.800
	Leadership Skills	0.75	0.102	0.85	0.70	0.450
	Leadership Ethics	0.325	0.112	0.320	2.50	0.006

As per Table 4.16, the equation ( $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \epsilon$ ) becomes:

$$Y = 2.30 + 0.025X_1 + 0.75X_2 + 0.325X_3$$

Where Y is the dependent variable the Performance County of government

X1 – Leadership styles

X2 – Leadership skills

X3 – Leadership ethics

The results indicated that there was no significant relationship between the contemporary leadership styles ( $p = 0.80$ ) and the performance of the County government. The findings also indicated no significant relationship ( $p = 0.450$ ) between the leadership skills and the performance of the County government. The results however indicated that there was significant relationship (0.006) between the leadership ethics and performance of the County government. In assessing the regression model for the performance of the County government as per the indicators in the study, the study evaluated the standardized coefficients of the study and illustrated the results as indicated in the table multiple regression model above. These results indicated that the leadership ethics was very important on the overall performance of the County government. This was interpreted to mean that despite the leadership style and skills applied by a leader of a county government of Machakos, general ethics in leadership is the most vital factor as ethics assists in creating a total influence over the performance of the County government

## 5. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the top County governmental officials have got their leadership skills through in service training programs. The findings could be because some leaders were chosen to be leaders through their level of education or the favors from their employers despite them having no leadership skills.

The study also concluded that leaders are required to be ethical in practice of duty. This could be in line with the fact that ethics and leadership goes hand in hand as a leader cannot be a leader with lack of ethics as a leader will lack influence to the subjects due to unethical practices

The study further concluded that County consider ethics in leadership as part of County government culture, this could be because, as a result of ethics, the County government is able to perform and be managed well hence ethics is considered part of County government school.

## 6. RECOMMENDATION

The findings from this study have policy implications on the County government performance.

Therefore based on the findings this study suggests the following policy recommendations:

- i. A County leadership policy document should be developed that will define the required ethics that the County leaders should portray in the administration of their duties
- ii. County government should develop their own policy documents detailing how various leaders in the County are expected to perform their duties in an ethical manner. This is important as it will ensure that all those with responsibilities in the County can influence performance by being ethical.

### Suggestions for Further Research:

Since research is the search of new knowledge, what has been dealt with is not exhaustive due to dynamic change in County leadership in relation to the present day ever changing unstable generation. In view of this therefore the following suggestions are made for further research

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