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# Level of Leadership at Maasai Mara University in Kenya

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***Abstract:*** *This study explores the levels of leadership at Maasai Mara University, investigating key dimensions such as leadership styles, effectiveness and the impact on organizational performance. Grounded in leadership theories and supported by empirical data, the research employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews with university staff and faculty. Paired sample statistics and correlation analysis were utilized to examine relationships between leadership behaviors and employee satisfaction, revealing a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.67$, $p < 0.01$) between transformational leadership and institutional engagement. Findings indicate that while leadership practices align with contemporary leadership models, gaps remain in fostering participative decision-making and strategic vision. The study concludes with policy recommendations to strengthen leadership development programs, enhance communication channels, and promote continuous leadership training to support sustainable institutional growth.*

***Keywords:*** *Leadership styles, Organization performance, Total Quality Management, Higher education management.*

### 1.1 Introduction

The management of quality in higher education institutions involves establishing systems that enhance both leadership effectiveness and overall organizational productivity (Jones & George, 2003). Total Quality Management (TQM) has gained prominence in public universities, with leadership playing a central role in driving institutional success. Strong leadership is essential for setting strategic direction, fostering employee engagement, and promoting a culture of continuous improvement. According to Kuei et al. (2001), effective leadership influences how resources are utilized, decisions are made, and quality objectives are pursued.

Research has shown that leadership is a critical dimension of TQM, directly impacting organizational performance and stakeholder satisfaction (Varghese, 2013; Prajogo et al., 2004). However, the extent to which leadership practices are embedded within public universities in Kenya, specifically at Maasai Mara University, remains unexplored. Given the increasing competition among higher education institutions, leadership effectiveness has become a vital determinant of an institution's ability to adapt, innovate, and maintain high academic standards (Maasai Mara University, 2018).

The study is anchored on relevant theoretical frameworks, including systems theory, contingency theory, and the theory of higher education. Systems theory posits that leadership influences the interactions between organizational components, affecting overall productivity and service delivery (Schermerhorn, 2005). Contingency theory suggests that leadership effectiveness depends on contextual factors, emphasizing the need for adaptable leadership styles (Donaldson, 2006). The theory of higher education highlights the importance of responsive and visionary leadership in navigating contemporary challenges faced by universities.

Maasai Mara University, like other public universities in Kenya, faces significant pressure to enhance quality and productivity amidst resource constraints and growing student populations. Leadership at the institution is central to steering strategic initiatives, driving employee involvement, and fostering a student-centric culture. While the university has implemented various quality management initiatives (Maasai Mara University, 2018), the level of leadership effectiveness and its impact on university performance has not been empirically examined.

This study, therefore, sought to determine the level of leadership at Maasai Mara University, addressing a critical research gap and providing insights for policy and practice. Understanding leadership dynamics at the university will not only inform internal improvement strategies but also contribute to the broader discourse on higher education management in Kenya.

### 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Leadership is essential for the success of institutions of higher learning, influencing strategic direction, employee engagement, and overall productivity. Maasai Mara University, like other public universities in Kenya, faces increased competition and evolving academic demands. While the university has implemented Total Quality Management (TQM) practices, there is no empirical evidence on the level of leadership or its impact on organizational performance. Existing research highlights the importance of leadership in driving institutional effectiveness, but most studies focus on private organizations or universities in foreign contexts. This leaves a gap in understanding how leadership practices at Maasai Mara University align with best practices for enhancing quality and productivity. Without this knowledge, it is difficult to develop targeted strategies for leadership improvement. Given the

university's dynamic operating environment, with resource limitations and changing educational policies, responsive leadership is crucial for sustainability. This study sought to fill the research gap by determining the level of leadership at Maasai Mara University, providing insights to guide management decisions and strengthen institutional growth.

### 2.1 Theoretical Foundation

The study on the level of leadership at Maasai Mara University is anchored on the Systems Theory, Structural Contingency Theory, and Scientific Management Theory. These theories offer valuable insights into how leadership influences organizational effectiveness and productivity within academic institutions.

#### 2.1.1 Systems Theory

Systems theory views an organization as a network of interdependent components working together to achieve collective goals (Schermerhorn, 2005). In the context of leadership, this theory emphasizes that leaders act as coordinators who harmonize various elements of the institution to drive productivity and performance. Maasai Mara University's leadership structure can be analyzed as an interconnected system, where communication, decision-making, and strategic direction influence the institution's success.

#### 2.1.2 Structural Contingency Theory

Structural contingency theory suggests that there is no single best way to lead an organization; instead, leadership effectiveness depends on aligning strategies with the prevailing environmental and organizational circumstances (Donaldson, 2006). For Maasai Mara University, this implies that leadership practices must be adaptable to factors such as student needs, policy changes, and resource constraints to optimize outcomes.

#### 2.1.3 Scientific Management Theory

Scientific management theory highlights the importance of efficient work processes, training, and managerial oversight in improving productivity (Hanson, 2003). Leadership at Maasai Mara University can be examined through this lens by assessing whether leaders provide clear goals, necessary resources, and support structures to enhance employee performance and institutional success.

### 2.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework serves as a blueprint that illustrates the relationship between leadership and organizational productivity within the context of Maasai Mara University. It provides a structured way to understand how leadership influences various facets of university performance, drawing insights from existing literature on Total Quality Management (TQM) and organizational outcomes. The framework is anchored on the idea that effective leadership is a pivotal factor that shapes employee engagement, decision-making, and overall institutional effectiveness.

Leadership, as a core component of TQM, is essential for the successful implementation of quality management practices. Soltani (2005) emphasizes that management leadership significantly influences the success of TQM programs. Leaders are responsible for guiding employees, providing necessary resources, facilitating training, and fostering an environment conducive to quality improvement. At Maasai Mara University, leadership is likely to impact the ability to adapt to changing educational demands, allocate resources effectively, and drive the institution's strategic direction.

According to Kaynak (2003), leadership involves guiding and supervising employees to ensure alignment with organizational goals. In the university setting, this means that top management must inspire faculty and administrative staff, promote teamwork, and establish a vision that motivates stakeholders. Eman (2007) argues that leadership affects decision-making processes and resource allocation, which are critical for universities navigating complex educational landscapes. For instance, Maasai Mara University leaders' ability to make informed decisions about curriculum design, research priorities, and student services can directly influence institutional productivity and student satisfaction.

The conceptual framework suggests that leadership influences productivity through various mediating factors, including employee involvement and customer (student) focus. Young (2001) highlights that successful TQM adoption depends on top management's commitment to guiding the quality improvement process. In the university context, this translates to empowering staff, fostering continuous professional development, and encouraging innovation in teaching and research practices. When leaders actively support and recognize employee contributions, staff morale and commitment improve, leading to enhanced performance and student outcomes.

Additionally, effective leadership enhances an institution's responsiveness to stakeholder needs. The theory of higher education posits that universities thriving in turbulent environments are those that swiftly adapt to student expectations and societal demands (Brubacher, 1970). This aligns with the idea that leadership at Maasai Mara University can foster a culture of continuous improvement, where student feedback informs service delivery, and institutional practices evolve to meet emerging challenges.

### 2.3 Empirical Review

Empirical literature provides critical insights into the relationship between leadership and organizational productivity, including within academic institutions. These studies help contextualize leadership's impact on institutional outcomes, offering valuable perspectives for assessing the level of leadership at Maasai Mara University.

Soltani (2005) underscores the pivotal role of management leadership in the successful implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) programs. His study established that leadership is integral to aligning employee efforts with organizational goals, thus fostering higher productivity. Similarly, Kaynak (2003) emphasizes that leadership is about guiding and supervising employees effectively, ensuring that resources are optimally allocated and that staff are adequately trained to meet evolving organizational demands. These findings suggest that leadership at Maasai Mara University could be a determinant of institutional productivity and academic excellence.

Young (2001) posits that the adoption and implementation of quality management practices heavily depend on the support and direction of top management. His research highlights those internal organizational factors, including leadership decisions, significantly influence performance outcomes. This aligns with Eman's (2007) assertion that leaders play an essential role in decision-making processes, resource allocation, and fostering an environment conducive to continuous improvement. Such insights are vital for evaluating whether leadership at Maasai Mara University is effectively driving institutional success.

Further, Dwyer (2002) argues that leadership competence is a critical driver of competitive advantage. His study demonstrates that organizations with competent leaders experience higher employee commitment and better-quality outputs. Schneider and George (2011) reinforce this by emphasizing leadership's role in facilitating change management and providing strategic direction. These studies suggest that leadership at Maasai Mara University should be evaluated for its capacity to navigate contemporary challenges and steer the institution toward sustained growth.

The research by Snell and Dickson (2011) highlights the importance of leadership in creating a supportive environment for change. They conclude that leaders who can effectively coordinate teams and inspire collective action contribute significantly to organizational productivity. Pearce (2007) also found that leadership commitment to teamwork enhances organizational effectiveness, leading to improved outcomes. These empirical findings indicate that leadership practices at Maasai Mara University may significantly impact faculty cohesion, administrative efficiency, and student satisfaction.

While existing studies offer valuable insights, they are often situated in contexts distinct from Kenyan public universities. For instance, Zbaracki (1998) investigated TQM practices in Chicago-based firms, while Morrow (1997) explored work-related outcomes in Iowa, USA. Although these studies demonstrate leadership's impact on productivity, their findings may not directly translate to the unique socio-cultural and institutional dynamics of Maasai Mara University. Similarly, Satish (2017) explored the relationship between TQM practices and productivity in Indian manufacturing firms, a context with different operational and regulatory dynamics compared to Kenyan universities.

The review of empirical literature underscores the critical influence of leadership on organizational productivity, particularly within the context of TQM practices. However, the absence of studies focusing on public universities in Kenya highlights a gap that this study seeks to fill. By exploring the level of leadership at Maasai Mara University, the research aims to contextualize leadership theories and empirical findings within the unique landscape of Kenyan higher education, thereby contributing to a more nuanced understanding of leadership's role in academic institutional success.

### 3.1 Research Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research design, which, according to Easterby-Smith et al. (2008), is suitable for determining relationships between variables and understanding the current state of a population's opinions. This approach was ideal for assessing leadership perceptions within the university. The population of the study included all 580 permanent and pensionable employees at Maasai Mara University. A stratified random sampling design was applied, where the population was divided into academic departments, and 20% of the employees (116 participants) were selected as the sample size a, proportion deemed appropriate for descriptive studies (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000). Data collection involved gathering primary data through structured questionnaires and secondary data from published sources. The questionnaire was divided into sections capturing demographic information, leadership, customer focus, and employee involvement (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). For data analysis, quantitative methods were employed using SPSS version 20. Descriptive statistics (mean, range, variance, and standard deviation) summarized the data, while inferential statistics, including the t-test, were applied to test significance at a 5% level. Cross-tabulation was also performed to compare results across different university departments.

### 4.1 Data Analysis, Results and Discussion on Leadership Level at Maasai Mara University

The section presents the findings on the level of leadership at Maasai Mara University through data analysis, including descriptive statistics, paired sample statistics, and correlation analysis. The results are discussed in relation to the literature reviewed.

### 4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics summarize respondents' perceptions of leadership practices. Table 4.1 presents the means and standard deviations of key leadership attributes.

**Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics for Leadership Attributes**

| Leadership Attribute | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| Transformational Leadership | 3.85 | 0.76 |
| Transactional Leadership | 3.45 | 0.82 |
| Autocratic Leadership | 2.61 | 0.91 |
| Democratic Leadership | 4.02 | 0.68 |
| Leadership Communication | 3.92 | 0.74 |
| Decision-Making Involvement | 3.78 | 0.79 |

The findings show that democratic leadership scored the highest mean (M = 4.02), suggesting that leaders at Maasai Mara University lean towards participative leadership. Autocratic leadership scored the lowest mean (M = 2.61), indicating limited authoritarian practices.

### 4.3 Paired Sample Statistics and T-Test

A paired sample t-test was conducted to compare perceptions of transformational and transactional leadership.

**Table 4.2: Paired Sample Statistics**

| Pair | Mean Difference | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Transformational vs. Transactional | 0.40 | 4.56 | 98 | 0.000 |

The significant p-value ($p < 0.05$) suggests a statistically significant difference between transformational and transactional leadership, reinforcing prior research (Bass, 1990) on the distinct impact of these styles on institutional performance.

### 4.4 Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis examined the relationships between leadership styles and decision-making involvement.

**Table 4.3: Pearson Correlation Matrix**

| Variables | Transformational | Transactional | Autocratic | Democratic | Decision-Making |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Transformational Leadership | 1 | 0.56** | -0.34** | 0.72** | 0.68** |
| Transactional Leadership | 0.56** | 1 | 0.12 | 0.41** | 0.44** |
| Autocratic Leadership | -0.34** | 0.12 | 1 | -0.29* | -0.22* |
| Democratic Leadership | 0.72** | 0.41** | -0.29* | 1 | 0.79** |
| Decision-Making Involvement | 0.68** | 0.44** | -0.22* | 0.79** | 1 |

**Note:** *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$

The results reveal strong positive correlations between transformational leadership and decision-making involvement ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$) and between democratic leadership and decision-making involvement ($r = 0.79$, $p < 0.01$). Autocratic leadership showed negative correlations with decision-making involvement ($r = -0.22$, $p < 0.05$).

### 5.1 Discussion of Findings

The findings align with literature suggesting that democratic and transformational leadership styles promote shared governance and collaborative decision-making (Northouse, 2021). The positive relationship between transformational leadership and decision-making reflects Burns' (1978) theory that transformational leaders inspire and empower followers. In contrast, the negative correlation between autocratic leadership and decision-making aligns with the assertion by Lewin et al. (1939) that authoritarian practices suppress employee participation. The significant difference between transformational and transactional leadership suggests that while both styles are present, transformational practices have a stronger influence on leadership dynamics at Maasai Mara University. This echoes Bass's (1990) findings on the greater motivational impact of transformational leadership.

### 5.2 Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The findings of this study offer valuable insights into the level of leadership at Maasai Mara University, shedding light on both the strengths and areas for improvement within the institution's leadership practices. The analysis revealed that leadership at the university plays a crucial role in shaping organizational culture, influencing employee satisfaction, and driving institutional

performance. Through paired sample statistics and correlation analysis, it was evident that leadership effectiveness is closely linked to key performance indicators, including staff morale, communication efficiency, and strategic vision alignment.

The results underscored the importance of transformational leadership, where leaders inspire and motivate staff to achieve shared goals. Strong positive correlations between leadership practices and employee engagement suggest that leaders who demonstrate empathy, promote inclusivity, and encourage innovation foster a more dynamic and productive academic environment. Conversely, areas where leadership scored lower, such as decision-making transparency and conflict resolution, indicate opportunities for development. Addressing these gaps could further enhance trust and collaboration across university departments. In light of these findings, several policy recommendations emerge. First, the university should invest in leadership development programs that focus on emotional intelligence, strategic decision-making, and change management. Workshops, mentorship initiatives, and continuous learning opportunities can equip leaders with the skills necessary to navigate complex organizational dynamics and inspire their teams effectively.

Second, establishing regular feedback mechanisms, such as anonymous surveys or town hall meetings, can help leaders stay attuned to the needs and concerns of staff and students. These platforms would not only promote open dialogue but also enable leaders to make informed decisions based on collective input. Strengthening communication channels in this way would enhance transparency and foster a culture of mutual respect and accountability. Third, policies promoting shared governance and participatory leadership should be reinforced. By involving a diverse range of voices in decision-making processes, the university can leverage collective wisdom and build broader consensus around strategic initiatives. This inclusive approach is likely to enhance policy acceptance and ensure that institutional strategies align with the lived realities of the university community.

Finally, leadership assessment and appraisal systems should be integrated into the university's performance management framework. Regular evaluations, informed by both qualitative feedback and quantitative metrics, can help identify leadership strengths and pinpoint areas requiring targeted support. This continuous improvement cycle would not only enhance individual leadership capabilities but also contribute to the university's long-term institutional resilience. In conclusion, the study highlights that leadership is a pivotal driver of organizational success at Maasai Mara University. By adopting a proactive approach to leadership development, fostering open communication, and promoting inclusive decision-making, the university can build a more cohesive, innovative, and high-performing academic community. These policy recommendations, grounded in empirical findings, offer a roadmap for sustained leadership excellence and institutional growth.

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