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Performance of Vocational Training Institutions in Kisumu County,  
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## Influence of Innovative Leadership on Organizational Performance of Vocational Training Institutions in Kisumu County, Kenya

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** The study examined effect of leader creativity and networking capabilities on organizational performance of vocational training institutions in Kisumu County.

**Methodology:** A descriptive design was adopted under which 28 organizations represented the units of analysis while 252 management staff represented its units of observation. A sample size of 154 was created from which 154 respondents were contacted. A structured questionnaire was designed and its validity and reliability was confirmed after conducting a pilot study. The data was analysed using descriptive, correlation and multiple linear regression statistical analysis was performed at the 95% confidence level.

**Findings:** There was a positive linear association between leader creativity ( $r=.612, p < 0.05$ ), leader networking ( $r=.590, p < 0.05$ ), and organizational performance. The regression model was statistically significant ( $F = 21.59, p < .001$ ) and explained 43.5% of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.435$ ). Leader creativity ( $\beta = 0.375, p < .001$ ) and leader networking ( $\beta = 0.291, p = .008$ ) both had significant positive effects, with creativity being the stronger predictor.

**Unique contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy (Recommendations):** This research recommends for the government agencies in vocational training to assess creativity capabilities of those applying for leadership and management positions in TVETs. This study recommends for TVET leaders to actively pursue and engage in networking activities to sense strategies they can use to improve performance from the private sector and other vocational training institutions. This study advances theory, practice, and policy in TVET by demonstrating that leader creativity and networking significantly enhance organizational performance. It validates transformational leadership theory and extends boundary-spanning leadership theory within the education sector. Practically, it highlights the need for leadership development programs that foster innovation and external collaboration. For policy, the findings advocate integrating leadership creativity and networking into TVET regulations, accreditation standards, and resource allocation strategies, thereby strengthening institutional capacity, improving performance, and promoting sustainable educational outcomes.

**Keywords:** *Innovative Leadership, Organizational Performance, Leader Creativity*

*Leader Networking, Technical Training, Vocational Education*

## 1.1 Introduction

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is a subsector of formal education that involves studying related sciences and technologies and the acquisition of specific attributes and skills, knowledge, and understanding associated to individuals in different sectors of social and economic life (Kiplagat & Kitainge, 2021). The United Kingdom (U.K.), Australia, and Belgium have a high number of TVET and have high GDP per capita (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2012). In Denmark, the current figures for enrolment and completion indicate the TVET is in a bad way with significantly fewer students have enroll, furthermore, half the students enrolled do not complete the programme (Aarkrog, 2020). In Indonesia, existing TVET institutions show low enrolment and employment rates compared to other educational sectors (Putra, 2023). The poor performance in the African region is much more pronounced.

In Egypt, there is low quality of TVET due to the outdated teaching facilities, poor teacher training, no or low acquittance with work-based learning (WBL), and a programme that may not be sufficient to provide skills needed by the labour market (Kemper & Renold, 2024). In Ghana, educational stakeholders raise a lot of concerns about the falling performance of TVET students that perform far below international standards and have struggled to obtain employment as a result of the circumstances in public rather than private institutions (Otchi, 2023). Majority of guardians give priority for their children to advance to grammar-based insitutions of learning and only 2.1% of parents selected TVET as an option for their children (Abubakar-Zagoon et al., 2024). In Tanzania, there is inadequate information on whether TVET graduates actualized their skills acquired in generating and promoting self-employment (Kibitanyi & Ismail, 2024).

Maina and Muathe (2023) noted the increase in students pursuing higher education has not improved TVETs performance calling for these institutions to recognize and harness strategic competencies so as to improve their performance. The Global Talent Competitiveness Index ranks Kenya after majority of its sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) neighbours in regard to the TVET skills. This is attributed to the perception that majority of its TVET graduands do not possess the skills for driving economic productivity (European Institute of Business Administration [INSEAD], 2023).

## 1.2 Statement of the problem

In Kisumu County, several factors contribute to the poor performance of TVET including low access to quality training and trainers, learning and training materials, learning facilities, and equipment. This has then contributed to the minimal enrolment in training opportunities, poor integration of management Information system (MIS) in TVET, limited budget allocation, low awareness on opportunities for available training, mismatch of skills to industry, and low entrepreneurial skills (County Government of Kisumu, 2023). For instance, approximately 41% of the youth's population in Kisumu County remain unemployed despite having completed tertiary education including TVET (Kigen & Ng'eno, 2024).

There is evidence from the global literature showing that overcoming the persistent challenges facing TVET and improving their performance can be addressed by innovative leadership practices and styles. While prior studies have focused on financial performance (Yator, 2018), strategic planning (Ochola & Kavinda, 2019), leadership styles (Gachunga et al., 2020), and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities (Wato & Kyalo, 2024). In view of the gaps manifest in the discussion above, this study sought to determine the influence of innovative leadership on organizational performance of vocational training institutions in Kisumu County.

### **1.3 Research objectives**

- i. To determine the influence of leader creativity on performance of TVET centers in Kisumu County
- ii. To assess the effect of leader networking on performance of TVET centers in Kisumu County

### **1.4 Significance of the study**

The study makes policy recommendations to support the capacity of TVET leaders to implement creativity and practice networking capabilities to enhance performance of their organizations. The study makes recommendations for leaders to achieve creativity and utilise networking capabilities to improve performance of their organization. The study contributed to academia by applying transformational leadership and boundary-spanning leadership theories to understand the role of innovative leadership practices on organizational performance in TVETs from a developing economy setting.

### **1.5 Theoretical framework**

#### **1.5.1 Transformational leadership theory**

The concept of transformational leadership was first introduced by Downton (1973) and later expanded by Burns (1978), who distinguished it from transactional leadership. Transactional leadership focuses on exchanges between leaders and followers, where cooperation is achieved through rewards or incentives (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). In contrast, transformational leadership seeks to influence followers' values, beliefs, and attitudes so that organizational goals and vision become internalized (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). Bass (1985) proposed a widely recognized model of transformational leadership consisting of four components, commonly known as the "four I's": inspirational motivation, idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Davis & Thilagaraj, 2022).

Inspirational motivation involves encouraging and motivating employees while clearly communicating organizational goals to enhance their performance. Individualized consideration refers to leaders giving personal attention to followers based on their talents and abilities, supporting their development and fostering positive relationships (Davis & Thilagaraj, 2022). Intellectual stimulation encourages employees to think creatively, challenge existing methods, and explore new ideas and approaches. Idealized influence occurs when leaders act as role models by demonstrating integrity, trust, and respect while prioritizing organizational interests over personal gain (Davis & Thilagaraj, 2022).

In this study, transformational leadership theory is relevant because its components support innovation and organizational performance. Inspirational motivation helps align employees with shared goals and promotes creativity. Individualized consideration strengthens relationships and supports employee development. Intellectual stimulation encourages problem-solving and innovative thinking, while idealized influence enables leaders to inspire trust, integrity, and respect among followers, fostering an environment conducive to innovation.

### **1.5.2 Boundary-Spanning leadership theory**

Boundary Spanning Leadership (BSL) theory, introduced by Aldrich and Herker (1977), explains the role of leaders in representing their organizations externally and managing information across organizational boundaries. These leaders help strengthen collaboration among different teams and stakeholders by building relationships with external partners, thereby improving organizational effectiveness (Cao et al., 2021). BSL emerged from the need for leaders to operate across both internal and external boundaries to respond strategically to complex environmental and industry challenges (Pryor & Henley, 2017).

The BSL highlights the growing importance of leaders as connectors who bridge social identity boundaries to support an organization's vision, mission, and goals. This involves creating linkages that enable the movement of information, resources, and people to where they are most needed. Ernst and Yip (2009) identified four key practices of BSL: suspending, reframing, nesting, and weaving. Suspended leadership creates neutral spaces where individuals interact beyond group identities. Reframing involves developing a shared identity that integrates different groups within the organization. Nesting structures interactions so that various groups play complementary roles aligned with the organization's objectives. Weaving focuses on building interconnected relationships across organizational and social boundaries to promote interdependence and collaboration (Ernst & Yip, 2009).

In this study, BSL is applied in several ways within Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions. Through suspending, leaders encourage individuals from diverse groups to reflect on their perspectives and shared goals. Reframing helps leaders manage differences and promote collaboration among departments, industry partners, and teaching staff. Nesting involves maintaining reliable and transparent communication with stakeholders to build long-term partnerships, particularly with local businesses. Finally, weaving enables leaders to develop interconnected networks and partnerships that support effective collaboration among individuals, teams, and organizations.

## **2. Empirical review**

In Malaysia, Osman and Kamis (2019) conducted a literature review guided by innovation leadership and transformational leadership theories and found that innovative leaders adopt diverse leadership styles to motivate employees to generate creative ideas, services, and solutions. In Indonesia, Hamid et al. (2024) explored principals' creative leadership in Islamic boarding schools using qualitative methods and found that leaders enhanced teacher

performance through training, recognition, emotional support, collaboration, and technology integration.

Sağlam and Uçar (2022) in Turkey used a correlational design and found a positive relationship between creative leadership qualities and organizational intelligence among schools, although the focus was not on organizational performance. In Pakistan, Nasir et al. (2022) employed Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with 424 employees in SMEs and found transformational leadership encouraged employee creativity, which improved performance. In Thailand, Channuwong et al. (2023) also reported a positive relationship between creative leadership and organizational performance.

Salman and Auso (2022) in Iraq found that innovative leadership improved strategic performance through customer satisfaction and participatory decision-making. In Indonesia, Restuputri et al. (2024) found that creative leadership improved SME performance through organizational ambidexterity. Overall, while these studies highlight the positive role of creative leadership, most were conducted outside the TVET sector or within business organizations.

In the United States (U.S.), Hassan et al. (2018) examined leadership networking among 233 employees across different sectors and found that external representation and monitoring positively influenced managerial effectiveness and workgroup performance. However, the study focused on workgroup performance rather than overall organizational performance. In Canada, Leithwood (2018) used a mixed-methods approach to examine school leadership networks and found that network connectivity improved the professional capacity of leaders, although it did not directly assess organizational performance.

Similarly, Tasselli and Sancino (2023) conducted qualitative research in Italy on community leaders during the COVID-19 pandemic and identified different leadership networking behaviours, such as network deepening and conflict management. However, the study focused on community leadership rather than organizational performance and was limited to the pandemic context. In China, Yuan and van Knippenberg (2022) found that leader network centrality influenced team performance through member collaboration, although the effects varied depending on team size. The study focused on collaboration rather than broader leader networking and was conducted in franchise bakery stores, limiting its relevance to educational institutions.

## **2.1 Research gaps**

There is limited research focusing on vocational training institutions, particularly within the Kenyan context. This study therefore contributes by examining innovative leadership and organizational performance specifically within vocational training institutions in Kisumu County. Most studies relied on qualitative approaches (Baporikar, 2020; Tasselli & Sancino, 2023; Hamid et al., 2024), literature reviews (Osman & Kamis, 2019; Asrarudin, 2023; Amisha, 2024), or focused on small samples (Fonias & Rocklind, 2021; Channuwong et al., 2023; Restuputri et al., 2024) which limited their generalizability. Others employed correlational designs that did not fully explain causal relationships between innovative

leadership practices and organizational performance. This study addresses these limitations by adopting a comprehensive empirical approach to examine influence of innovative leadership on organizational performance among TVETs in Kisumu County, thereby providing more context-specific and generalizable findings.

### **3.1 Methodology**

Descriptive cross-sectional survey research design was suited the study's objective of examining the relationship between innovative leadership and the performance of TVET institutions.

### **3.2 Population of the Study**

The target population consisted of 28 TVET institutions in Kisumu County as the units of analysis, while the units of observation were 252 academic and administrative management staff from these institutions. This population included 28 top management staff, 56 middle management staff, and 168 first-line management staff, making a total of 252 respondents.

### **3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique**

The Yamane (1967) formula was used to determine the sample size, resulting in 154 respondents from the population of 252 at a 5% margin of error. The study applied proportionate stratified random sampling where the final sample distribution consisted of 17 top managers, 34 middle managers, and 103 first-line managers, totaling 154 participants.

### **3.4 Instrumentation**

The structured questionnaire contained standardized close-ended questions measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). It had six sections: general information, leader creativity (12 items), leader networking (12 items), leader teamwork (11 items), emotional intelligence (12 items), and organizational performance (14 items).

### **3.5 Validity and reliability of the Instrument**

The study assessed **content validity** through expert review to ensure the questionnaire covered all relevant aspects of the variables. **Face validity** was also evaluated through a pilot test involving respondents with similar characteristics to the target population. The tool's reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha to test the internal consistency of the questionnaire items by conducting a pilot among 10 respondents. The results revealed all variables produced coefficients above the acceptable threshold of **0.7**, indicating reliability.

### **3.6 Data collection and analysis**

The study collected primary data using an online questionnaire distributed through Google Forms. Respondents received the survey link via WhatsApp, allowing them to complete the questionnaire at their convenience. Follow-up reminders were sent to improve the response rate. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 27 was used to analyse data by frequencies and percentile distributions, mean, and standard deviation scores. Pearson

correlation ( $r$ ) was used to examine relationships between variables, while multiple linear regression assessed the magnitude and direction of these relationships at the 95% confidence level, with statistical significance accepted when  $p < 0.05$ . The regression model used was:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \varepsilon$$

Where:

$Y$  = Organizational Performance

$X_1$  = Leader Creativity

$X_2$  = Leader Networking

$\beta_0 - \beta_2$  = Regression coefficients

$\varepsilon$  = Error term

#### **4. Data analysis**

Out of the 154 questionnaires distributed, 117 were properly completed and returned, resulting in a 75.9% response rate, while 37 questionnaires (24.1%) were not returned. In terms of gender, male respondents formed the majority at 53.8%, while females accounted for 46.2%, suggesting that men slightly dominate management positions in vocational training institutions, although female representation remains substantial. Most respondents held a bachelor's degree (51.2%), followed by those with master's degrees (42.8%), while 6.0% possessed doctorate degrees. This indicates that most management staff meet the minimum qualification requirements for leadership positions, with many having pursued postgraduate education, particularly among senior management. In terms of work experience, the majority of respondents (59.8%) had more than 12 years of experience, while 20.5% had less than 5 years and 19.7% had between 6-11 years of experience. The high proportion of experienced staff suggests that respondents were well positioned to provide informed insights, thereby enhancing the reliability of the study findings.

#### **4.1 Descriptive analysis**

##### **4.1.1 Leader creativity**

The descriptive results an overall mean score of 3.66 (SD = 1.15) for leader creativity, indicating that respondents generally agreed that their supervisors demonstrated creative leadership behaviors. The highest agreement was recorded for supervisors providing appealing visions of what the organization could achieve ( $M = 4.31$ ), followed by encouraging staff to approach traditional problems in innovative ways ( $M = 4.03$ ). Respondents also agreed that supervisors created a positive atmosphere, avoided unnecessary changes when systems were working, and made only essential demands on staff. Additionally, supervisors were perceived to offer new perspectives on complex issues, recognize employee achievements, and communicate expectations clearly. However, only moderate agreement was observed regarding supervisors' support for employee personal development and their efforts to help staff find deeper meaning in their work. Overall, these findings suggest that leader creativity is

reasonably practiced within the institutions, though there is room for improvement in mentoring and employee development.

#### 4.1.2 Leader Networking

The leader networking had a composite mean score of 3.39 (SD = 1.181), indicating moderate agreement among respondents regarding networking behaviors by supervisors. Respondents agreed that supervisors actively listened to others, integrated fragmented information into coherent insights, and allowed space for uncertainty before making decisions. They also acknowledged that supervisors recognized connections between their work and other departments, aligned diverse priorities toward common goals, and helped colleagues view familiar problems from new perspectives. However, respondents only moderately agreed that supervisors encouraged questioning of assumptions, paused judgment to understand others' viewpoints, and considered broader system impacts when making decisions. Similarly, connecting people from different departments and considering upstream and downstream effects received lower mean scores. These findings suggest that while some networking behaviors are evident, stronger cross-boundary collaboration and systems thinking could further enhance leader networking practices.

#### 4.2 Correlation analysis

Table 1 The correlation analysis indicated that leader creativity and leader networking had positive and statistically significant relationships with TVET performance. Leader creativity ( $r = 0.612$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) showed a strong positive association with organizational performance, suggesting that creative leadership practices contribute to improved performance outcomes. Similarly, leader networking ( $r = 0.590$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) also demonstrated a significant positive relationship with TVET performance, indicating that leaders who build connections and collaborate effectively with others can enhance institutional performance.

**Table 1: Correlation coefficient**

	Leader creativity	Leader networking
Leader creativity	1	
Leader networking	.674**	1
Organizational performance	.612**	.590**
Sig.	0.000	0.000

#### 4.3 Regression analysis

Table 2 shows the model summary showed an  $R^2$  value of 0.435, meaning that 43.5% of the variation in TVET performance could be explained by leadership creativity and networking, while 56.5% was influenced by other factors not included in the study. The ANOVA results ( $F = 21.59$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) confirmed the overall regression model was statistically significant, indicating these variables jointly influenced TVET performance. The coefficient results revealed that leader creativity ( $\beta = 0.259$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and leader networking ( $\beta = 0.188$ ,  $p < 0.05$ )

had positive and statistically significant effects on TVET performance. This indicates that leader creativity and leader networking are key drivers of performance in TVET institutions.

**Table 2: Model Summary**

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
.660	0.435	0.415	0.35926		
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	11.147	4	2.787	21.59	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	14.456	112	0.129		
Total	25.603	116			
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.845	0.302		6.109	0.000
Leader creativity	0.259	0.071	0.375	3.636	0.000
Leader networking	0.188	0.069	0.291	2.717	0.008

## 5. Discussion of findings

### 5.1 Leader creativity

The study established that leader creativity has a significant positive influence on the performance of TVET institutions. Creative leaders cultivate environments that encourage staff to generate innovative solutions, develop new ideas, and enhance service delivery, which in turn improves organizational outcomes. This aligns with transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978), particularly the intellectual stimulation component, where leaders inspire curiosity and problem-solving among their staff. Empirical studies support these findings: Jobir (2025) highlighted that transformational leadership fosters creativity and motivation in TVET institutions, improving academic and institutional performance. Mugo and Kiboss (2023) noted that leaders who provide intellectual stimulation motivate subordinates to tackle challenges innovatively, while Osman and Kamis (2019) demonstrated in Malaysia that leaders promoting creativity encouraged staff to develop new products, services, and solutions, directly impacting organizational effectiveness. Similarly, research from Switzerland (Fischer & Barabasch, 2023) and China (Cai & Yu, 2023) showed that leaders fostering creativity through openness, personalized learning, and solution-oriented approaches enhance vocational training outcomes. In Indonesia, Rahmawati et al. (2022) and Herijanto et al. (2023) confirmed that leaders with strong technopreneurship skills and creative self-efficacy improve innovative behavior and institutional performance. In Kisumu County, descriptive findings indicated that TVET leaders effectively communicate vision and strategic goals, enabling staff to apply creativity to operational challenges, thus enhancing institutional resilience.

## **5.2 Leader networking**

The study found that leader networking positively impacts TVET performance. Drawing on BSL theory (Aldrich & Herker, 1977), leaders who engage in both internal and external networks can access new information, foster partnerships, and mobilize resources to address institutional challenges. International evidence supports this finding: in Germany, Njengele et al. (2024) demonstrated that collaboration between industry representatives and TVET leaders enhanced skills development and institutional effectiveness. In Malaysia, Khalid and Noor (2024) highlighted that stakeholder engagement and collaboration are essential for modernizing TVET institutions and raising their profile. Similarly, a blended-learning postgraduate program for TVET leaders in South Africa (Smit & Bester, 2022) found that networking experiences improved leadership development, critical thinking, and resilience, which translated into better organizational performance. For Kisumu County, TVET leaders facing underfunding and resource constraints can use networking to identify new revenue streams, form partnerships, and collaborate with the private sector to sustain and improve institutional performance.

## **6. Conclusion**

Leader creativity has a positive and statistically significant effect on the performance of TVET institutions in Kisumu County. This indicates that managers who foster innovation, encourage problem-solving, and provide intellectual stimulation enhance organizational outcomes. Transformational leadership theory is a useful lens for understanding how creative leadership contributes to institutional performance. TVET managers should therefore prioritize developing their creativity capabilities to improve overall institutional effectiveness. Leader networking positively and significantly influences the performance of TVET institutions in Kisumu County. Leaders who actively engage in internal and external networks, build partnerships, and facilitate cross-boundary collaboration strengthen institutional resources and strategic decision-making. Boundary spanning leadership theory provides a relevant framework for understanding how networking practices improve organizational performance. TVET managers should focus on enhancing their networking skills to foster better institutional outcomes.

## **7. Recommendations**

The Technical and Vocational Education and Training Authority (TVETA) and Cabinet Secretary should assess the creativity capabilities of candidates for leadership and management positions in TVET institutions, considering their track record in providing innovative solutions. Additionally, TVETA should implement programs to develop and enhance the creativity skills of current TVET leaders. TVET leaders should actively improve their networking capabilities by joining professional bodies and associations at both national and international levels. Locally, this includes organizations such as the Kenya Association of Technical Training Institutions (KATTI) and the TVET Curriculum Development, Assessment and Certification Council (TVET-CDACC). Globally, leaders are encouraged to engage with bodies like the

World Federation of Colleges and Polytechnics (WFCP) and the Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa (CAPA) to foster partnerships and collaborations.

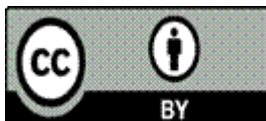
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