

LEADERSHIP STYLES AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN THE COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF LAIKIPIA, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed investigated how different styles of leadership relate with employee engagement levels in Laikipia County. The research sought to assess how transformational leadership, transactional leadership ,participative leadership and servant leadership impacts employee engagement, and analyze the overall effect of leadership styles on employee engagement and service delivery in the County Government of Laikipia. The research was grounded in Situational Leadership Theory, Transformational Leadership Theory, and Servant Leadership Theory as its theoretical framework. The study adopted a descriptive survey design to examine all employees within the Laikipia County Government, various departments. The study targeted 3,580 employees, with a sample size of 360 determined using Yamane's formula. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure equal representation from different departments. Data was collected using Likert-scale questionnaires distributed to employees across departments. Descriptive statistics, in combination with regression analysis, were used to analyze the data, and the findings presented in tables and figures to support the research objectives. The descriptive results revealed varying levels of agreement, neutrality and disagreement regarding the different items assessing each variable. The regression results revealed that leadership styles comprising of transformational, participative and servant leadership positively and significantly affects employee engagement in Laikipia County Government. Transactional leadership style had a positive but insignificant effect on employee engagement. The study concluded that enhancing aspects of leadership styles in the operations of the county government of Laikipia leads to enhanced levels of employee engagement. The study recommends that the County Government of Laikipia enhance employee engagement by strengthening transformational, transactional, and participative leadership through mentorship programs, inclusive decision-making, transparent rewards, and open communication.

Key Words: Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership, Participative Leadership, Servant Leadership

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INTRODUCTION

Leadership styles function as fundamental elements that mold both employee involvement and organizational culture and institutional performance results. The world has seen different leadership models develop through time starting from authoritarian and bureaucratic systems before transitioning to participatory and transformational leadership approaches. More inclusive leadership approaches now dominate organizational leadership because they prioritize employee motivation alongside empowerment and shared making of decisions as pointed out by Khan *et al.* (2020). The modern globalized workplace demands organizational leadership which promotes innovation together with adaptability and collaborative work practices. According to Kumar, Gupta, and Mishra (2020), transformational and servant leadership styles are becoming more and more popular in the US and the UK because of their ability to boost productivity and worker engagement in both publicly and privately owned sectors. Employee engagement is a direct response to leadership practices of both developed and emerging economies because good leadership creates organizational stability and ensures the commitment of workers. The connection between staff engagement and styles of leadership is crucial to the administrations of communities because it requires the efficient provision of services that are conditional on the availability of motivated employees.

Transformational leadership demonstrates its fundamental traits through its practice of visionary leadership and motivational empowerment. Leaders who use this particular leadership style develop a powerful vision which drives their team members towards personal growth. The process of transformational leadership increases employee engagement through its promotion of autonomy combined with trust and innovative work methods. The research conducted by Alonderiene and Majauskaitė in 2016 demonstrates that transformational leadership dramatically increases employee organizational commitment together with their job satisfaction and workplace happiness. The application of transformational leadership strategies in Kenyan government institutions leads to improved employee motivation and better performance of public services according to Barasa and Kariuki. The complete implementation of transformational leadership face multiple challenges because organizations encounter both resistances to change and existing bureaucratic frameworks. County governments require leadership methods which will support their institutional goals while meeting the expectations of their staff members.

The transactional leadership approach requires organizations to develop structured methods, which depend on established reward and punishment systems, to reach their organizational objectives. Leaders who use this style create specific targets while defining performance standards before using evaluation methods to verify regulatory compliance (AIOqlah, 2021). The method provides employees with defined responsibilities that leads to better workplace efficiency and reduced workplace confusion. The framework of transactional leadership works best in situations that need rigid protocol compliance like county government operations operating under regulatory frameworks.

The success of a business depends on employee engagement which creates major effects on organizational productivity and job satisfaction and workplace morale. The employee's emotional attachment to their work and the organization establishes their level of interest and active engagement. Workers develop a stronger bond with their work than job satisfaction, which shows that they feel content with their current position, because engagement drives them to exceed their basic responsibilities and work toward organizational goals according to Mone, London and Mone (2018). Employees who are engaged at work show increased motivation and they put in extra effort while working to satisfy their own goals and the goals of their organization. Companies that focus on employee engagement practices experience reduced employee turnover while delivering superior service and performance to their customers.

Employee engagement has a critical impact on business success and national economic development in Laikipia County. According to KIPPRA, which published its 2021 report, employee engagement in Kenya's public sector remains extremely low because public sector workers show engagement levels that often fall

below 40% The organizational elements of Laikipia County which include bureaucratic procedures and insufficient training programs and ambiguous career advancement systems result in decreased employee dedication to work. Research has shown that both workplace conditions and job security act as key elements that determine employee engagement. Employees who receive recognition and career advancement opportunities together with workplace appreciation show greater commitment to their work responsibilities (Saks 2019). Organizations with strict structural frameworks and insufficient support mechanisms for their staff members experience low employee engagement which results in decreased productivity and higher rates of absenteeism and employee turnover.

Statement of the Problem

The method through which a leader directs their team determines how engaged employees will be because effective leadership practices create an environment that keeps workers dedicated to their tasks while delivering exceptional results according to (Cheluget, Komu, & Kibe, 2019). Leaders must adopt leadership techniques which create employee motivation and provide work guidance while developing a workplace atmosphere that promotes teamwork and enables workers to grow professionally (Turner, 2019). Organizations should establish their optimal operational environment by using transformational leadership together with participative and servant leadership styles because this combination will strengthen employee trust and satisfaction which leads to better workplace integration.

Organizations that involve their staff members achieve superior outcomes through increased employee commitment which leads to better work performance and greater goal achievement. County governments, being essential public service institutions, require leadership approaches that drive employee motivation and performance to enhance service delivery. Public sector organizations in county governments, however, show a different reality from their ideal situation because of leadership flaws which create obstacles to employee participation. The analysis of impacts of styles of leadership on engagement of employees represents an essential key to resolve workforce problems while enhancing public sector operational effectiveness.

The research shows that Laikipia County and other Kenyan county governments have significant challenges with employee engagement because their leaders do not use appropriate leadership styles which help boost employee engagement. Public sector employees show signs of disengagement which results in decreased work efficiency and higher rates of absenteeism and lower quality of service delivery according to Cheluget Komu and Kibe (2019). The Public Service Commission 2022 found that forty percent of county administration staff members feel unsatisfied because of professional advancement restrictions and poor leadership and lack of recognition programs. Laikipia County suffers from poor leadership which causes centralized decision-making processes and low employee engagement to diminish creative output and create employee demoralization according to Setiawan *et al* (2021).

The disengagement creates negative effects on public services such as education and health care and infrastructure development because it leads to project execution delays and resource mismanagement and substandard service quality. The research on leadership impact on organizational performance shows that there is no understanding of how various forms of styles of leadership impact levels of engagement of employees in Kenya's decentralized governance system. The researchers studied productivity instead of engagement because Cheluget Komu and Kibe (2019) and Fouad (2019) studied sectors outside public administration while Setiawan *et al*. (2021) focused on productivity. The research examined how leadership styles affect employee engagement, which had not been studied before in Laikipia County, through its study of employee engagement and leadership styles connection.

Objectives of the Study

- To assess the effect of transformational leadership on employee engagement in the County Government of Laikipia, Kenya.

- To examine the impact of transactional leadership on employee engagement in the County Government of Laikipia, Kenya.
- To analyze the role of participative leadership in enhancing employee engagement in the County Government of Laikipia, Kenya.
- To determine the effect of servant leadership on employee engagement in the County Government of Laikipia, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Empirical Review

Mishra et al (2023) conducted a comprehensive investigation of the impact of transformative leadership on employee engagement and performance. According to the research, up-to-date empirical data on the concurrent relationship between transformative leadership, employee engagement, and organizational performance outcomes was gathered and analyzed. It researched the existing academic works in order to understand how transformational leadership helps to boost workforce motivation and commitment. While the main approach of the research is literature review, the research delivers important findings. However, the analysis does not have application to public sector institutions, particularly county governments in Kenya. This knowledge gap is addressed through quantitative analysis of Laikipia County employee engagement under transformational, transactional, participative and servant leadership. In order to develop useful recommendations for enhancing the efficacy of governance in the public sector leadership, the study centres on primary data collecting.

Ramli et al (2019) studied how transactional leadership strengthens organizational commitment within the industry while working with the millennial generation. A total of 350 employees formed the population in a local IT provider company located in Jakarta Indonesia. The researchers applied a descriptive and verification research design which used Partial Least Square (PLS) modeling for quantitative analysis to study transactional leadership and its effects on organizational commitment and employee turnover intention. Research results demonstrated transactional leadership creates more impact on organizational commitment than career development because it directly affects employee retention. The research findings demonstrate that organizations should strengthen their transactional leadership approaches to boost employee commitment especially when dealing with millennial workers. The research studied only the IT industry while excluding public sector employee engagement. The research explores transactional leadership together with additional leadership approaches to understand their effects on employee engagement within Laikipia County Government.

In secondary educational institutions in Muranga County, Kenya, Maundu et al (2020) investigated the impact of transactional leadership on engagement among staff members. The systematic random selection of 368 teachers was used to study 3,860 teachers with the help of survey techniques. Linear regression and correlation analysis of the data were done using SPSS version 23 along with descriptive statistics. The research results showed that transactional leadership positively affects employee engagement with its components since structured leadership practices and reward systems and performance monitoring enhance the levels of engagement. The investigation only concerned the education institutions and neglected the evaluation of transactional leadership impact on county government organizations. The research is aimed at investigating the effect of different leadership approaches such as transactional leadership on Laikipia County's public service sector employee engagement.

Chan (2019) examined the relationship between participative leadership and work engagement and job satisfaction, while investigating workplace fun as a moderator. The study was based on a quantitative research design and the data was collected from 177 retail employees working in Hong Kong. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used to research the results and it was found that participative leadership has positive

effect on work engagement and job satisfaction of employees. Since leaders who empower employees in decision making processes have higher work engagement that results in higher job satisfaction, the relationship between participative leadership and job satisfaction is mediated through work engagement. The results of research showed that the effect of participative leadership on job satisfaction is stronger when employees report more workplace fun. The analysis of the study was limited to retail businesses and did not include public sector institutions. This study investigates the impact of participative leadership on employee engagement in public service in Laikipia County to provide insights which were useful in public sector governance and workforce motivation.

Aziedjo (2024) examined the correlation between career development, employee engagement and retention at the organizational level. The study highlights the importance of career development in determining employee performance, engagement, and retention, which is associated with the sustainability and competitive edge of an organization in the long-term. It highlights the relevance of the human resource strategies such as motivation, incentives, and talent management in the positive work environment creation. According to the analysis, there is a strong correlation between career growth and employee engagement, and professional growth and training are significant drivers of employee commitment. The paper also covers the various issues that contribute to employee turnover, the difference between voluntary and involuntary turnover and how personal and organizational issues like career development and family issues influence the decision. The review concludes that career development programs, when implemented strategically, are necessity in retaining high performers, enhancing productivity, and developing a dedicated workforce, as well as recognizes the challenges organizations have when developing successful career development programs.

Theoretical Framework

Situational Leadership Theory

Employee engagement within the County Government of Laikipia benefits from adaptable leadership as described through Situational Leadership Theory. A leader who modifies their leadership approach to match their workforce needs creates better engagement and motivation within their team. Transformational leadership works best to inspire employees who need vision but transactional leadership proves most effective for achieving tasks and policy compliance (Fouad, 2019). The theory supports leadership styles which combine participative and servant approaches because these methods involve staff participation while making decisions which leads to higher commitment and engagement. The research investigates the effects of various leadership styles on employee engagement because public sector leadership adaptability can be studied through situational leadership theory.

Transformational Leadership Theory

The notion was first put forth by James MacGregor Burns in 1978, and Bernard Bass improved and expanded upon it in 1985. The leadership approach described by this theory enables employee motivation through vision creation and innovation promotion and personal growth support (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Transformational leaders develop close connections with staff members while boosting mental growth and establishing a reliable workplace that inspires dedication. Transformational leadership comprises four essential elements that include idealized influence as charismatic leadership alongside inspirational motivation as visionary leadership and intellectual stimulation for encouraging innovation and individualized consideration which provides personalized support to employees (AlOqlah, 2021). These elements allow transformational leaders to establish workplaces where staff members experience appreciation and dedication to their tasks.

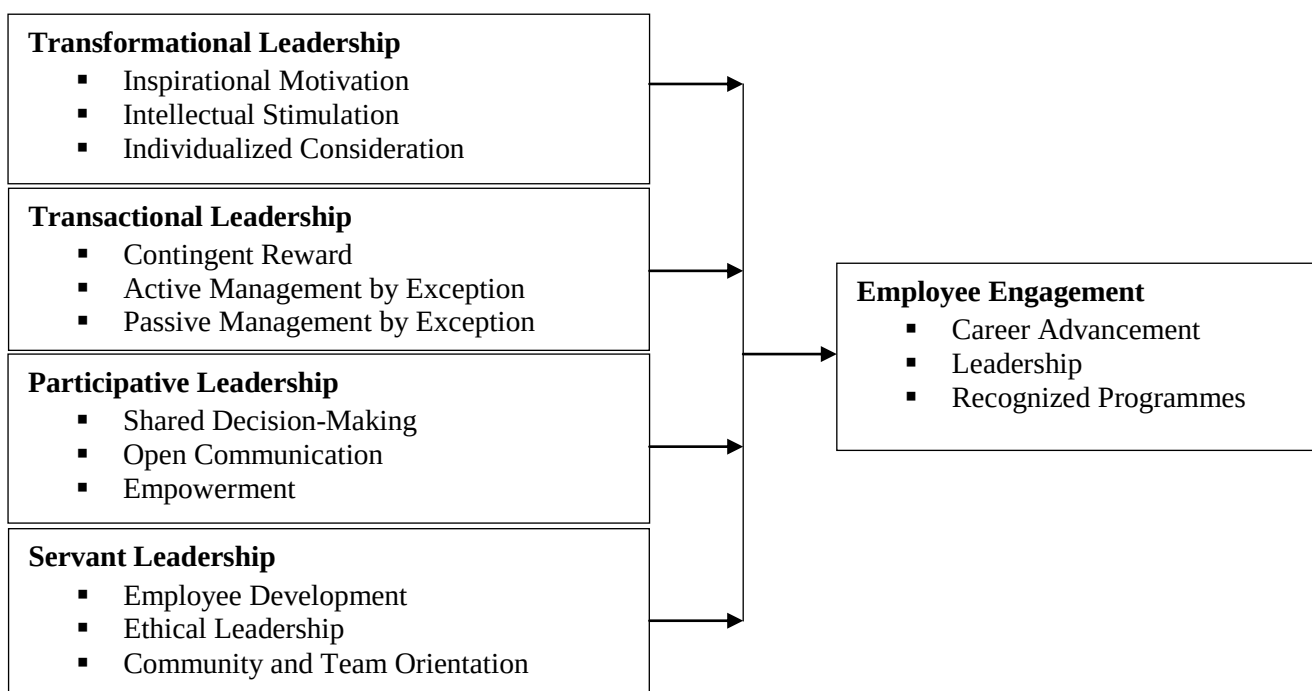
The hypothesis creates a clear link between staff engagement and leadership, which makes it immediately relevant to this study. Transformational leadership creates better employee motivation and job satisfaction and organizational performance through its ability to establish empowering work environments according to Hussein et al. (2022). The County Government of Laikipia can benefit from transformational leadership which motivates staff members to extend their formal duties while contributing original ideas to achieve

organizational objectives. The way leaders behave toward their employees directly affects engagement levels so transformational leaders who inspire vision creation and empower participation and innovation create higher workforce performance and commitment. The research studies how transformational leadership and other leadership styles impact employee engagement in Laikipia County, which trains leaders to improve governance practices.

Servant Leadership Theory

The Servant Leadership Theory which Robert K. Greenleaf established in 1977 describes leadership as a service-based method that requires leaders to fulfill their staff members' needs before achieving organizational goals (Greenleaf, 1977). The traditional leadership model which operates through direct employee supervision and control stands in opposition to this approach. The practice of servant leadership requires leaders to demonstrate empathy and active listening skills while they maintain their responsibilities toward team members which requires them to develop their abilities through protective control of their power and authority. Servant leaders create productive workspaces through their commitment to cooperative work methods and their responsibility to make moral choices and their efforts to improve employee health. The leadership approach enhances employee participation because it helps employees realize their worth and gives them power to participate in important work activities for the company (Kumar, Gupta & Mishra, 2020).

Conceptual Framework



Independent Variables

Dependent Variable

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Researcher 2025

METHODOLOGY

For this study, a descriptive survey approach was used as the research strategy. The County Government of Laikipia studied all 3,580 employees who worked in eight departments which included both leaders and non-leaders according to the County Government of Laikipia report from 2020. The population of this study included department heads who held senior management positions and managers and supervisors who belonged to middle management and all team leaders and lower management officials who need to manage department operations and direct employees. The study applied stratified random sampling to ensure equal

representation of workers from all departments in the County Government of Laikipia. The proper sample size was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula which allows sample calculation from known total population numbers.

The study's main tool for gathering data was a semi-structured questionnaire. A 5-point Likert scale was included so that participants could express how much they agreed or disagreed with statements about leadership styles and employee engagement. Semi structured questionnaires combine the advantages of structured questions with open ended questions which enable researchers to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Prior to data collection, a pilot study was conducted to test the questionnaires. The pre-test study was in the nearby Nyandarua County.

To investigate how leadership styles affect employee engagement, the researchers used a combination of qualitative and quantitative data analytic methodologies. The SPSS system processed the quantitative data, while researchers used correct coding methods to handle Likert scale responses. The researchers used constructs to measure variables, and they entered data through questionnaire items which they processed in SPSS.

The researchers employed descriptive statistics to conduct quantitative analysis which produced essential data characteristics through mean, and standard deviation measurements. The statistics provided a clear explanation of employee engagement levels and how employees reacted to different leadership styles. The researchers used multiple regression analysis to study the relationship between independent leadership styles and the dependent variable of staff engagement. The multiple regression model took the following form:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon \quad \text{equation (i)}$$

Where:

- Y=Employee Engagement (dependent_ variable)
- β_0 =Constant Term
- $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4$ =Regression coefficients
- X_1 =Transformational Leadership
- X_2 =Transactional Leadership
- X_3 =Goal-Oriented Leadership
- X_4 =Participative Leadership
- ε =Error term

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Response Rate

The study targeted collecting data from a sample of 360 employees drawn from various departments from County Government of Laikipia. 263 of the distributed questionnaires were completely completed and sent back for examination. This resulted in a 73.1% response rate. For analysis and drawing conclusions, the response rate was deemed adequate and sufficient. According to Marshall_ and Rossman (2021), a response rate of more than 70% is appropriate for analysis and drawing conclusions. This was in line with their claims. The considerably high response rate was a result of using a drop and pick data collection strategy.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistical techniques were used in the study to show how responses were distributed across the many variables recorded in the questionnaire. The researchers used central tendency metrics to calculate mean values and standard deviation metrics to measure data dispersion for their data analysis. Participants were asked to indicate their agreement with each statement using a five-point Likert scale which included 1 for strongly disagree and 2 for disagree and 3 for neutral and 4 for agree and 5 for strongly agree. The researcher

calculated mean scores and standard deviations for each item to help with understanding the results. The mean scores showed which way most respondents thought about the question. The participants showed high agreement when the mean value reached 5 while they showed low agreement when the mean value neared 1. Respondents who answered showed neutrality through their means which fell between 2.5 and 3.4. The standard deviation operated as the metric that assessed how much responses differed from the average response. The mean response showed high consistency because a lower standard deviation value demonstrated that respondents answered with similar opinions. The higher standard deviation value showed that participants had different views about the issue which caused them to respond with different answers.

Transformational Leadership

Table 1 presented the descriptive statistics on transformational₂leadership.

Table 1: Transformational Leadership

Transformational Leadership	Mean	Std.Dev
Leaders inspire employees with a clear vision that motivates them to work toward organizational goals	3.540	1.451
Leadership encourages optimism and confidence, fostering belief in employees' ability to achieve great results	3.506	1.469
Leaders challenge employees to think creatively and explore innovative solutions for workplace challenges	3.316	1.529
Employees are encouraged to question traditional approaches and develop new ways to improve work processes	3.479	1.395
Leaders take time to mentor and support employees' career development and personal growth	2.471	1.271
Supervisors recognize individual strengths and provide opportunities that align with employees' capabilities	3.673	1.229
Average	3.331	1.391

Source: Research Data (2025)

The study results demonstrated that participants achieved an average score of 3.331 for their assessments of transformational leadership statements. The County Government of Laikipia used transformational leadership, but this statement received only partial acceptance from respondents. The standard deviation of 1.391 reached a high value because most respondents showed different levels of assessment regarding the existence of transformational leadership qualities.

The results showed that respondents supported the assertions which stated that leaders used a clear vision to motivate employees to achieve organizational objectives (mean=3.540, std.dev=1.451) while leadership created an environment of optimism which enabled workers to believe in their potential to deliver outstanding performance (mean=3.506, std.dev=1.469) and supervisors identified each worker's skills to offer tasks matching their specific abilities (mean=3.673, std.dev=1.229). The respondents showed neutral responses to the two statements which claimed that leaders motivated their teams through creative thinking and original problem-solving methods (mean=3.316, std.dev=1.529) and that employees received support to develop innovative methods for work process improvement (mean=3.479, std.dev=1.395). The general public disagreed with the statement which claimed that leaders spent time to guide workers during their career development process and their personal growth journey (mean=2.471, std.dev=1.271).

The study results show that transformational leadership was used by the County Government of Laikipia at a moderate level. The majority of employees believed their leaders delivered a compelling vision which built trust in their abilities and detected their personal strengths to drive them toward achieving organizational objectives. Employees showed less confidence about how leaders handled problems because they were unsure about the leaders' ability to create new solutions. The leaders' failure to provide sufficient guidance and

professional growth opportunities created a major problem which indicated that organizations need to practice their transformational leadership development methods with greater focus.

The results from this study support the findings of Odumeru and Ifeanyi (2013) who demonstrated that transformational leaders build their followers through their vision and motivational methods and their treatment of followers as individuals which causes followers to become more dedicated to their organizations and participate more actively. The study conducted by Ngunjiri (2018) showed that transformational leadership practices in Kenyan county governments enhanced employee motivation and performance by promoting a shared vision and recognition of individual contributions. The findings reached opposite conclusions to the research of Muchiri and Cooksey (2011) who discovered that public organizations use transformational leadership to create an environment which encourages employees to develop innovative ideas and creative solutions. The study showed that leaders who practiced intellectual stimulation created an environment which allowed staff members to develop new ideas through their work with traditional methods.

The thematic analysis showed that transformational leadership implementation improved employee motivation and engagement according to most respondents who worked in their department. The majority of respondents indicated that their department requires mentorship programs and career development programs while employees need their leaders to assist with their personal and professional growth. Other respondents emphasized on the need for leaders to provide continuous feedback, recognize individual and team achievements, and create an environment that nurtures creativity and innovation. Some respondents identified transparent communication as a crucial element that enables employees to participate in decision-making processes while feeling valued by their organization. The methods described by the organization included establishing open communication channels and providing training programs and matching employee duties to their abilities and career objectives.

Transactional Leadership

Table 2 outlines the descriptive statistics on transactional leadership.

Table 2: Transactional Leadership

Transactional Leadership	Mean	Std.Dev
Employees receive recognition and rewards for meeting or exceeding performance expectations	2.456	1.247
Rewards and incentives are fairly and consistently provided based on employees' contributions to organizational success	3.087	1.416
Supervisors closely monitor work performance and address deviations from expected standards promptly	2.711	1.370
Leadership provides immediate corrective feedback when employees make errors in their tasks	2.658	1.301
Leaders intervene only when serious issues arise rather than providing ongoing guidance and support	2.597	1.289
Workplace problems often escalate because leadership does not address them until they become critical	2.688	1.157
Average	2.700	1.296

Source: Research Data (2025)

The average score of 2.7 which shows that respondents had a standard measure of moderate their understanding about the presence of transactional leadership practices in County Government. The standard deviation which reached 1.296 had a high value which showed that people different views about the study because they had different experiences with transactional leadership. The results show that respondents had no particular opinion about two statements which described what rewards and incentives from the organization said about employee performance (mean=3.087, std.dev=1.416) and what supervisors did when they checked employee work (mean=2.711, std.dev=1.370) and how leaders handled employee work errors (mean=2.658,

std.dev=1.301). The study found that respondents showed a neutral response toward the two statements which said that leaders only provide help during serious problems (mean=2.597, std.dev=1.289) and that supervisors fail to handle workplace issues until they reach critical status (mean=2.688, std.dev=1.157). The respondents rejected the statement that organizations provided employees with acknowledgment and rewards when they met or exceeded performance targets (mean=2.456, std.dev=1.247).

The research results showed that people viewed transactional leadership as being executed at a moderate level. Employees felt that rewards and incentives were not consistently or fairly given based on performance, and that leaders were not proactive in monitoring or addressing performance issues. Supervisors only stepped in to resolve serious problems while feedback systems showed weak results which needed more time to deliver feedback. The county government leadership system functions through a reactive management style which prevents employees from remaining motivated and engaged at work. The results are consistent with Akanji, Mordi, and Okafor (2020) who found that transactional leadership results in minimal employee engagement when leaders fail to provide timely feedback and fair rewards. The study showed that employees need continuous backing because they rely on corrective measures instead of ongoing help which diminishes their desire to create innovative solutions. Bass and Riggio(2006) stated that@ transactional leadership enables organizations to achieve better results when leaders present contingent rewards and establish precise systems for employee responsibility.

Thematic examination of transactional leadership improvements showed that most respondents wanted leaders to establish a reward system which would show employee achievements through direct recognition of their contributions. Some respondents emphasized the need for supervisors to provide regular feedback and continuous performance monitoring rather than waiting until issues escalate. Other respondents recommended that leadership should adopt a more supportive and communicative approach which ensured clear expectations and fair corrective actions. Other areas highlighted comprised of encouraging open dialogue, offering professional development opportunities, and linking rewards directly to measurable performance outcomes.

Participative Leadership

Table 3 presents results on participative leadership.

Table 3: Participative Leadership

Participative Leadership	Mean	SD
Employees are included in decision-making processes that affect their work environment	2.456	1.443
Employees are encouraged to express their opinions and contribute to workplace initiatives	2.791	1.565
Transparent and open communication ensures employees are well-informed about organizational matters	2.821	1.512
Employees feel comfortable discussing concerns and suggestions with their supervisors without fear of criticism	2.388	1.468
Employees have the autonomy to make decisions related to their responsibilities without excessive supervision	2.882	1.400
Leadership entrusts employees with responsibilities that support professional growth and ownership of their work	3.133	1.465
Average	2.745	1.475

Source: Research Data (2025)

The average participative leadership score of 2.745 showed that employees partially approved their leaders' decision-making practices which involved including others in their process. The standard deviation of 1.475 showed that people responded to the question with different answers because of its high variability. The study found that workers held distinct perspectives about the degree of participatory leadership which existed in their organization. The results established that respondents maintained a neutral viewpoint about two statements which claimed that employees participated in decision-making processes which affected their work environment (mean=2.456, std.dev=1.443) and that employees received encouragement to share their thoughts

about workplace policies and initiatives (mean=2.791, std.dev=1.565) and that open communication practices kept employees informed about organizational topics.

Respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement which claimed employees could handle their work decisions without needing constant managerial oversight (mean=2.882, std.dev=1.400) and that leadership granted employees work duties which enabled their professional development and responsibility for their tasks (mean=3.133, std.dev=1.465). Respondents however showed disagreement with the statement which claimed employees could share concerns with supervisors without worrying about facing criticism (mean=2.388, std.dev=1.468).

The study showed that Laikipia County Government implemented participative leadership practices at a medium level. Employees felt restricted in their ability to participate in decision-making processes and to communicate and to control their work activities. The organization offered some chances for employees to participate and to contribute but these opportunities were not clearly visible throughout the entire organization. Employees seemed to lack understanding how much value their opinions received and how much power they possessed to affect workplace policy. In addition, a large number of employees did not feel safe to share their issues with their superiors because they feared facing negative consequences.

The results of this study support the findings of Kim and Yuk (2019) who demonstrated that participative leadership improves employee engagement when leaders establish open communication channels and provide employees with decision-making authority. The practice of obtaining employee input through symbolic participation does not enhance engagement because organizations only seek employee input but fail to implement their suggestions. Amah and Ahiauzu (2013) discovered different findings in their research about the Nigerian public sector which showed that participative leadership methods led to enhanced employee engagement and improved organizational performance. The study established that employee productivity and innovative capacity increased when leaders included staff members in essential decision-making procedures while maintaining open lines of communication.

Thematic analysis showed that employees need more participative decision-making because it establishes trust within their departments. The participants in the study emphasized that organizations should create open communication systems which allow employees to provide feedback without facing any kind of negative consequences. The participants in the study suggested that departments should conduct regular meetings and brainstorming sessions to improve their collaborative work and collective responsibility for organizational objectives. The respondents requested that organizations should empower their employees through delegation which should include acknowledgment of their individual work accomplishments because this practice would establish trust and confidence between employees and their supervisors.

Servant Leadership

Table 4 displays the results on servant leadership.

Table 4: Servant Leadership

Servant Leadership	Mean	SD
Leadership prioritizes employee development by providing training opportunities and career advancement support	2.475	1.283
Employees are encouraged to acquire new skills through workplace learning initiatives	3.529	1.454
Supervisors demonstrate integrity and fairness in all workplace decisions and interactions	2.517	1.263
Leaders make ethical decisions that promote fairness and transparency in the organization	3.521	1.325
Leaders foster teamwork and encourage collaboration among employees to achieve goals	3.506	1.201
Supervisors show genuine concern for employee well-being and promote a positive workplace culture	2.452	1.225
Average	3.000	1.292

Source: Research Data (2025)

The research results showed that respondents moderately agreed with the statement because they gave a 3 rating which indicated their belief that County Government officials practiced servant leadership. The standard deviation of 1.292 showed that staff members at the company held different views about how much they observed servant leadership practice in their workplace. The findings showed that respondents required their employees to develop new skills through workplace learning programs with a mean score of 3.529 and a standard deviation of 1.454. The findings confirmed that respondents agreed with three statements which described workplace learning initiatives as a way to develop new skills and knowledge, and ethical leadership practices that created fairness and transparency, and leadership practices that helped employees work together to achieve shared objectives.

The statement that supervisors showed integrity and fairness during their work responsibilities received a neutral evaluation (mean=2.517, standard deviation=1.263). The research findings demonstrated that participants disagreed with two statements. The first statement claimed that leadership organizations provide their staff members with training programs. The second statement asserted that supervisors in the organization demonstrated actual concern for their employees' welfare while establishing a healthy working atmosphere. The study results indicated that Laikipia County Government employees maintain a moderate level of servant leadership practice.

The researchers discovered that employees at the organization believed their leaders supported learning activities and group work and ethical standards which demonstrated that the leaders used servant leadership methods to create fair workplace environments. The results showed that workers preferred better personal growth and personal well-being programs which showed that their managers failed to provide adequate support for their professional development and personal health needs. The organization exhibits elements of servant leadership but their implementation shows varying degrees of success because employees display both agreement and neutrality toward these practices. The research results match those of Liden et al. (2014) who demonstrated that servant leadership leads to better organizational cooperation and moral conduct and group learning activities. The organization offers its employees dedicated career growth programs which establish mandatory work time requirements for all employees. Servant leadership emphasizes fairness and teamwork which reflects its dedication to serving others and its commitment to ethical leadership practices. Nyaga and Kamau (2017) discovered that servant leaders developed employee well-being through their mentoring activities and their job development initiatives. The current study results show that employees in the study area perceived these aspects as receiving minimal focus from the organization which created a perception that different methods of implementing servant leadership lead to distinct effects on employee engagement within public sector organizations.

The thematic analysis revealed that respondents identified mentorship and coaching programs as essential requirements for career development which would help workers achieve their professional goals. The majority of respondents recommended that leaders should demonstrate more empathy along with better understanding of staff needs through conducting regular check-ins and providing transparent communication methods. Respondents expressed the need to improve decision-making transparency while establishing fair processes for promotions and rewards within their organization. Few respondents indicated the need for a more inclusive leadership approaches that actively involve employees in goal setting and organizational decision processes.

Employee Engagement

Table 5 shows that descriptive results on employee engagement.

Table 5: Employee Engagement

Employee Engagement	Mean	Std.Dev
Employees have clear opportunities for career advancement within the organization	4.156	1.154
Employees feel encouraged and supported in pursuing professional development and career growth	3.951	1.242
Employees perceive the leadership in the organization as effective in guiding the team towards achieving shared goals	3.989	1.193
Employees feel that leadership actively listens to their concerns and involves them in decision-making processes	3.913	1.231
Employees believe that recognized programs in the organization effectively reward their contributions and achievements	3.814	1.201
Employees feel that their hard work and dedication are frequently acknowledged through formal recognition initiatives	4.110	0.882
Average	3.989	1.150

Source: Research Data (2025)

According to the average results, the County Government of Laikipia's employee engagement score was 3.989, meaning that the majority of employees typically agreed that they were involved in their work. A relatively high level of participation among the respondents is shown by the mean value. The research results showed that employees had different levels of attraction to their work and their engagement patterns showed a standard deviation of 1.150 which demonstrated that their responses had various degrees of variability. The findings showed that participants agreed with the statements which said employees had distinct career advancement paths available to them within the organization (mean=4.156, std.dev=1.154), that employees received professional development support from their workplace (mean=3.951, std.dev=1.242) and that employees regarded organizational leadership as competent in directing their work toward common objectives (mean=3.989, std.dev=1.193).

The respondents agreed with the statement which said employees believed that leadership listened to their problems and included them in making decisions (mean=3.913, std.dev=1.231), that employees believed that recognized programs in the organization effectively reward their contributions and achievements (mean=3.814, std.dev=1.201) and that employees felt that their hard work and dedication was frequently acknowledged through formal recognition initiatives (mean=4.110, std.dev=0.882). The findings show that Laikipia County Government employees display a highly positive engagement level towards their work. The employees at the organization perceived that it provided them with definite paths to develop their skills and advance their careers while promoting their professional development and maintaining strong leadership which helped teams reach their shared objectives. Additionally, employees believed that their leaders listened to their concerns, involved them in decision-making, and that their efforts were appreciated through recognition and reward programs.

These results were supported by Khan et al. (2019) who found that effective leadership styles characterized by openness, support, and recognition significantly enhance employee engagement and job satisfaction. However, Markos and Sridevi (2010) observed that in public institutions, leadership efforts alone do not necessarily translate into higher engagement levels. The study argued that structural issues such as bureaucratic systems, inadequate incentives, and limited career progression opportunities can hinder engagement even when leadership appears supportive.

From the thematic analysis on responses regarding strategies to improve employee engagement, respondents indicated the need for enhanced communication and participatory decision-making, noting that regular

feedback sessions and open forums would help employees feel more valued and involved. Majority suggested that leadership should strengthen recognition and reward systems to motivate staff and acknowledge exceptional performance. Another dominant theme was the call for increased opportunities for career development through continuous training, mentorship, and transparent promotion criteria. Respondents further highlighted the importance of improving the work environment by ensuring fairness, adequate resources, and supportive supervision.

Inferential Statistics

The study used inferential statistics, such as regression and correlation analysis, to look at the links between the variables under investigation.

Correlation Analysis

To ascertain the direction and strength of the association between various styles of leadership and employee engagement, the study employed a correlation analysis. The results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Correlation Analysis

		Transformational Leadership	Transactional Leadership	Participative Leadership	Servant Leadership	Employee Engagement
Transformational Leadership	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig.(2-tailed)					
Transactional Leadership	Pearson Correlation	.041	1			
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.504				
Participative Leadership	Pearson Correlation	.338	-.006	1		
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.923			
Servant Leadership	Pearson Correlation	.208	.099	.384	1	
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.001	.109	.000		
Employee Engagement	Pearson Correlation	.775	.073	.485	.431	1
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.238	.000	.000	
	N	263	263	263	263	263

Source: Research Data (2025)

The findings demonstrated that employee engagement in the County Government of Laikipia, Kenya, is positively and significantly correlated with transformational leadership. A p-value of 0.000 and a correlation value of 0.775 demonstrate this. The findings suggest that improving transformational leadership elements in Laikipia County leads to higher employee engagement levels. The results tallies with Irianto2 and2 Basbeth (2021) who established existence of a positive relationship between transformational leadership style and employee engagement as the style enhanced employee dedication and morale in the workplace. However, the results run counter to those of Breevaart and Bakker (2018), who discovered that increased levels of employee engagement are not always the result of transformational leadership. In some organizational contexts, transformational leaders may set overly ambitious goals or create high expectations that lead to employee burnout and reduced engagement over time.

The results further established that transactional leadership positively but insignificantly correlates with employee engagement in the County Government of Laikipia, Kenya. A correlation value of 0.073 and a p-value of 0.238 demonstrate this. The findings suggest that improving transactional leadership in Laikipia County has a negligible impact on higher employee engagement levels. The findings are consistent with those of Ramli et al (2019), who discovered that because transactional leadership directly impacts employee retention, it has a greater effect on organisational commitment than career development. Rehman, and Fatima (2020) however established that transactional leadership has a significant and positive relationship with employee engagement. Transactional leadership provides clear expectations, structured rewards, and performance feedback, which fosters a sense of fairness and purpose among employees, ultimately driving higher engagement.

The findings also showed that employee involvement in the County Government of Laikipia, Kenya, is positively and significantly correlated with participatory leadership. A correlation coefficient value of 0.485 and a p-value of 0.000 demonstrate this. The findings imply that improving certain aspects of participative leadership within Laikipia County contributes significantly to enhanced levels of employee engagement. The results tallies with findings from Fatoki (2023) who indicated that participative leadership leads to positive outcome of job satisfaction. Employees feel empowered and engaged at work and hence part of participative leadership leads to increased job satisfaction. Khan and Anjum (2021) however argued that excessive employees level of involvement in the making decision processes often led to delays, and reduced efficiency which in turn lowers employee engagement levels.

Additionally, the results showed that staff engagement in the County Government of Laikipia, Kenya, is favourably and significantly correlated with servant leadership. The findings show that improving servant leadership methods in Laikipia County greatly increases employee engagement, with a correlation of 0.431 and a p-value of 0.000. The findings support the findings of Ozturk, Karatepe, and Okumus (2021), who determined that work engagement has more positive outcomes from servant leadership than job satisfaction. McCann, Graves, and Cox (2014) however revealed that while servant leadership promotes ethical behavior and trust, it does not necessarily translate into higher engagement levels among employees. In public institutions, behaviors in servant leadership like empowerment and empathy may be overshadowed by rigid organizational hierarchies and formal communication channels, thus limiting their influence on employee engagement.

Multiple Regression Analysis

The study used multiple_ regression analysis with a 95% confidence level to assess how various leadership philosophies affected employee engagement. The Model Summary,ANOVA table, and regression_ coefficients were the three main outputs of the analysis.

Model Summary

The degree of association_ between the independent factors and the dependent_ variable was shown using the model summary. The percentage that the independent variables_ accounted for on the dependent variable was also displayed in the model summary. The results are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.837 ^a	.701	.696	.492

a. Predictors: (Constant), Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership, Participative Leadership and Servant Leadership

Source: Research Data (2025)

According to the results, the R-value established in the study was 0.837. This implies that there exists a high relationship between leadership styles (transformational leadership, transactional leadership, participative leadership and servant leadership) and employee engagement in Laikipia County Government. Similarly, the coefficient of @determination represented by R-Square value was 0.701 implying that 70.1% of employee engagement in Laikipia County can be accounted by leadership styles.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

The study used the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to determine the statistical significance of the model connecting the dependent and independent variables. The results are shown in Table 8.

Table 8: ANOVA

	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	f	Sig.
1	Regression	146.447	4	36.612	151.089	.000 ^b
	Residual	62.519	258	.242		
	Total	208.966	262			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement

b. Predictors: (Constant), Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership, Participative Leadership and Servant Leadership

Source: Research Data (2025)

The findings showed that the p-value was less than 0.05, at 0.000. This suggests that there was statistical significance in the model that connected the study's independent and dependent variables. For this reason, it was thought to be a good fit for the study and for evaluating the relationships.

Regression Coefficient

The regression coefficients were utilized in the study to show the effects of independent variables on the dependent variable. Table 9 displays the results.

Table 9: Regression Coefficients

Predictors	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	sig.
(Constant)	.521	.175		2.972	.003
Transformational Leadership	.691	.038	.669	18.414	.000
Transactional Leadership	.029	.040	.025	.725	.469
Participative Leadership	.158	.035	.173	4.488	.000
Servant Leadership	.218	.036	.223	5.987	.000

Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement

Source: Research Data (2025)

From the initial model of the study, the optimal model becomes:

Employee Engagement = 0.521 + 0.691 (Transformational Leadership) + 0.218(Servant Leadership) +0.158 (Participative Leadership) + 0.029 (Transactional Leadership)

The findings demonstrate that staff engagement in Laikipia County Government is favourably and significantly impacted by transformative leadership. A p-value of $0.000 < 0.05$ and a beta-value of 0.691 demonstrate this. According to the findings, the county's employee engagement levels rise by 0.691 units when transformational leadership components are increased by one unit. The findings are consistent with those of Odumeru and Ifeanyi (2013), who discovered that transformational leaders inspires followers through

motivation, vision, and individual consideration, resulting in increased organisational commitment and engagement.

The results further revealed that transactional leadership positively but insignificantly affects employee engagement in Laikipia County Government. This is depicted by the results' beta-value 0.029 together with p-value 0.469. The study results show that workforce engagement in the county increases by 0.029 when transactional leadership components increase by one unit. The findings show agreement with the results of Ramli et al. (2019) study who discovered that because transactional leadership directly influences staff retention, it has a greater effect on organisational commitment than career development.

The findings show that staff engagement in Laikipia County Government is positively and significantly impacted by participatory leadership. This is demonstrated by a p-value of $0.000 < 0.05$ and a beta-value of 0.158. The findings suggest that a one-unit increase in participative leadership dimensions brings about 0.158 increases in employee engagement.. The findings are in line with Fatoki's (2023) assertion that positive work satisfaction outcomes are a result of participative leadership. Participatory leadership contributes to higher job satisfaction since it empowers and engages employees at work.

The study also demonstrated that employee engagement in Laikipia County Government is positively and significantly impacted by servant leadership. The results show that a p-value of $0.000 < 0.05$ together with a beta-value of 0.218 demonstrates this. The results show that a one-unit increase in servant leadership components will produce a 0.218 increase in workforce engagement for the county. Liden et al. (2014) claim that servant leadership creates greater levels of staff engagement and organisational commitment by improving teamwork, moral behaviour, and group learning.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study demonstrated that transformational leadership positively affects employee engagement in the County Government of Laikipia. The results show that leaders who create an inspiring vision and establish trust with their team and show appreciation for their team members' unique capabilities achieve higher employee engagement. The study showed that the county needs better mentorship and career development and innovation programs than what the county currently provides. Organizations implement transformational leadership practices at their current level but need to develop these methods to achieve better employee engagement results.

The study found that transactional leadership affects employee engagement in County Government of Laikipia with a positive but unimportant impact. The leadership style implements corrective actions when problems arise instead of offering ongoing assistance and acknowledgment to team members. The county government will face challenges because this method will limit employees' natural drive and prevent them from staying involved and performing their duties.

The study shows that participative leadership positively and significantly increases staff engagement within the Laikipia County Government. The research demonstrates that when managers include employees in decision-making processes and establish open communication channels and create work assignments which give employees autonomy to develop their skills, they will achieve higher work engagement along with increased motivation. The research shows that organizations can increase employee commitment and trust and goal alignment through participative leadership practices which organizations should strengthen because they currently use the practice at a basic level.

The study established that servant leadership positively and significantly influences employee engagement in the County Government of Laikipia. The research shows that leaders who focus on collaborative work and ethical behavior and team learning development produce higher employee engagement. Employees recognized the organizational initiatives to develop teamwork and ethical decision-making and workplace

learning, but they identified personal growth and health improvement areas as missing. Servant leadership practices exist throughout the organization, but their implementation varies across different organizational areas.

The research suggested that Laikipia County Government should develop transformational leadership through establishing mentoring and professional development programs which will help employees achieve their personal and professional objectives. The organization needs to provide training for its leaders who should establish a work environment that enables employees to develop their creative and innovative capabilities. Leadership development efforts should concentrate on building leaders who can effectively motivate their teams to work towards achieving organizational objectives.

The study recommended that the County Government of Laikipia strengthen transactional leadership practices by establishing a transparent and consistent reward and recognition system that fairly links employee performance to tangible incentives. The leaders need to establish a schedule which includes both ongoing performance reviews and the delivery of feedback that provides constructive guidance instead of waiting until problems emerge. The county leadership should establish an interactive communication method which enables free discussion while ensuring that all disciplinary measures are handled with impartiality. Leadership training programs should focus on developing supervisors who can motivate their teams through effective reward systems and transparent performance standards which will result in greater employee involvement and improved workplace performance.

The County Government of Laikipia needs to establish better participative leadership methods through two main actions which include developing more inclusive decision-making systems and achieving complete departmental transparency throughout the organization. Organizations require leaders who establish protected environments which enable workers to share their views and recommendations without facing judgment while their contributions should receive proper evaluation for decision-making processes. Employee self-assurance and responsibility for their job performance will improve through three activities which include regular consultative meetings and collaborative problem-solving sessions and empowerment through delegation of duties. The study recommends that the County Government of Laikipia enhances servant leadership practices by increasing mentorship and coaching programs to support employee career growth. Leaders should actively show their empathy toward staff members by demonstrating their ongoing support through frequent contact with employees. The organization needs to implement two main improvements which involve establishing transparent decision-making processes and creating leadership methods which will enable staff members to participate in setting organizational objectives and making decisions.

Areas of Further Studies

The focus of the study was in Laikipia County Government. The study recommends another study in other county governments and other sectors for comparative analysis of results. The study further established that leadership styles comprising of transformational, transactional, participative and servant leadership accounted for 70.1% of variations in the levels of employee engagement in the county. The study thus recommends another study focusing on other indicators not included in the study and accounting for the remaining 29.9%.

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