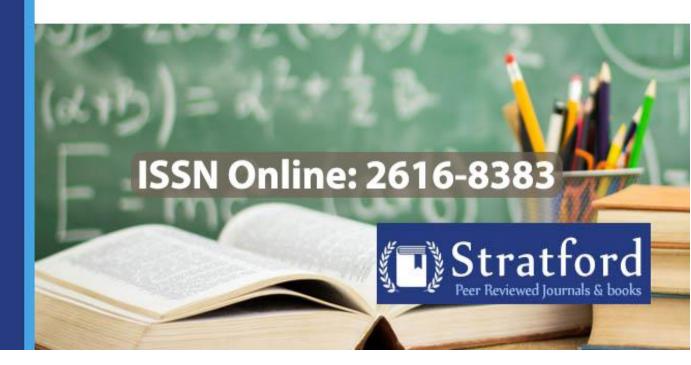# Journal of **Education**

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# Political Staff Promotions, Vice Chancellor's Leadership Style and Performance of Private Universities in Kenya

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## Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between political staff promotions, the vice chancellor's leadership style, and the performance of private universities in Kenya, highlighting their significant roles in shaping the educational landscape. Despite the renowned flexibility, autonomy, and competitiveness of private universities, these institutions in Kenya encountered challenges due to political staff promotions and leadership dynamics, potentially impacting their performance and standing in the competitive educational sector. The research was prompted by concerns over the suboptimal performance of private universities in Kenya, with issues such as quality of education, financial constraints, fierce competition, and governance problems being key contributing factors. The study aimed to explore the effects of political staff promotions and the leadership style of vice chancellors on the performance of these institutions, seeking to understand the dynamics influencing their success or shortcomings. Employing Transformational Leadership Theory and Resource Based View Theory as its foundation, the research utilized a descriptive design for an in-depth analysis. Data were collected from a purposively selected sample of five prominent private universities in Kenya through questionnaires and interviews targeting vice chancellors, deans, and lecturers. This methodological approach facilitated a detailed examination of the research variables and their interrelations. The findings indicated that political staff promotions had insignificant impact on university performance, with a non-significant p-value of 0.666 (B = -0.174), suggesting that political considerations, while present, did not substantially affect institutional effectiveness. In contrast, the vice chancellor's leadership style showed a significant positive correlation with university performance, evidenced by a significant p-value of 0.020 (B = 0.475), indicating the role of effective leadership in driving institutional success. This underlined the potential of strong, visionary leadership to guide private universities towards higher levels of excellence and competitiveness. The study recommends a focus on leadership development, the implementation of transparent promotion processes, and efforts to improve teaching quality and infrastructure. By addressing these areas, private universities in Kenya could strengthen their foundations, better navigate existing challenges, and seize opportunities for ongoing improvement and significant contributions to the wider educational sector.

## 1.0 Background to the Study

The performance of private universities has indeed attracted a lot of researchers globally, and these institutions continue to play a significant role in advancing knowledge and driving innovation in a variety of fields (Lesmana & Nasution, 2020). Private universities have gained a reputation for being innovative, dynamic, and highly competitive, and they have invested heavily in research and development to enhance their academic programs and reputation (Van, Thi & Thi, 2020). Private universities often have greater flexibility and autonomy in developing their academic programs and research initiatives, and they are able to respond more quickly to changing educational and research trends (Saba, 2022). This has allowed private universities to establish themselves as leaders in a variety of fields, and to attract top researchers from around the world. According to Mahdi, Nassar and Almsafir (2019), private universities often have well-funded research programs, and they offer researchers access to state-of-the-art facilities and equipment, as well as opportunities for collaboration with other researchers and industry partners. This has made private universities an attractive destination for researchers looking to advance their careers and make significant contributions to their fields. Moreover, Ngugi, Gachunga and Mukanzi (2021) assert that, private universities have been able to develop strong partnerships with industry and government, which has allowed them to leverage their research strengths to address real-world challenges and contribute to economic development.

The performance of private universities is important to research for several reasons; private universities often have the resources, facilities, and expertise necessary to conduct cutting-edge research and make significant contributions to their fields (Cahyono *et al.,* 2020). When private universities perform well, it can lead to advancements in knowledge and the development of new technologies and innovations that have a wide-ranging impact on society. The performance of private universities can be evaluated based on several factors, including academic quality, research output, financial stability, and reputation (Akhtar *et al.,* 2022). Abdullahi, Raman and Solarin (2022) also observe that private universities often have a strong focus on providing high-quality education and research, and they may use a variety of metrics to assess their performance and ensure that they are meeting their goals. When the performance of a private university is good, it is likely to attract more students to the institution, as a strong academic reputation and research output can make the university more attractive to prospective students (Abdullahi *et al.,* 2022).

Today, private universities struggle to survive under tough competition in the business environment domestically and globally (Eide, 2018). According to Hayden (2019), such learning institutions are faced with an increasingly competitive environment in which it is difficult to maintain a sustained competitive advantage. True competition consists of the life of constant struggle and rival against rival (Shields & Bredemeier, 2018). It is observed that true competitive situation requires a roadmap to achieve a common goal that brings about struggle among private learning institutions over times. The choice of effective business strategy appears to have gained credence in the education sector as institutions compete to gain competitive advantage over their rivals, as one of the best responses, as many private institutions now found themselves largely in the business world.

It is important to note that a good performance can lead to an improvement in the quality of education at the university, as faculty and staff may be motivated to maintain high standards and continually improve teaching and research practices (Cahyono *et al.,* 2020). A good performance can also lead to the development of new partnerships and collaborations with other universities, industry partners, and government agencies, which can further enhance the university's research and educational capabilities (Stachová, Papula, Stacho & Kohnová, 2019). Conversely, poor performance can be very detrimental to a private university, since it can lead to decreased enrollment as prospective students may be less likely to choose a university with a poor reputation or financial instability (Stachová *et al.,* 2019). A poorly performing university may find it difficult to develop new partnerships and collaborations with other universities, industry partners, and government agencies, which can limit its research and educational capabilities (Cahyono *et al.,* 2020).

Studies have shown that staff promotions on political grounds can have a negative impact on the performance of private universities (Brady, Chaskin & McGregor, 2020). Khan, Abbas, Kumari and Najam (2022) argues that, when promotions are based on political connections rather than merit and qualifications, it can result in the appointment of unqualified or inexperienced individuals to leadership positions, which can compromise the quality of education and research conducted in the institution. In some instances, qualified and experienced faculty members may choose to leave the university due to the promotion of unqualified individuals, resulting in a loss of institutional knowledge and expertise. It is also important to note that, faculty and staff who have been passed over for promotion in favour of politically connected individuals may become demotivated and less committed to the university, which can lead to decreased productivity and performance (De Maio & Dixon, 2022).

Moreover, promotions on political affiliations may result into the university ending up with unqualified and inexperienced individuals that may lack the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively conduct research and teach courses, resulting in lower quality research output and a decline in the quality of education provided by the institution (Fiori & Fiori Arantes, 2023). Furthermore, if word gets out that promotions are based on political connections rather than merit, the university's reputation may be damaged, making it more difficult to attract and retain talented faculty and students. Soyaltin-Colella (2022) believe that, in order to maintain high standards of education and research, it is important that promotions are based on merit and qualifications rather than political considerations. Universities should have transparent and objective promotion criteria and procedures, and should ensure that all faculty and staff are evaluated fairly and consistently.

In today's era, every organization will have to compete in the market to perform better and sustain its position. So, in this regard, leaders play a crucial role to accomplish the organization's goals and boost employees' performance (Paracha *et al.,* 2021). Leaders are those who use their power to influence and motivate employees for the betterment of themselves as well as for the organization. Leadership has a very strong influence on employees' attitudes towards their job (Jamaludin, 2021). Leadership is reported to have a strong influence on employees' attitudes towards their job. Nowadays, leaders' roles have changed in organizations and the success of any organization depends on the leadership style carried by its leader (Saleem, 2015). Leadership has a great impact on employees' job performance (Agustina, Sambung & Yunikewaty, 2022). In higher education performance depends on many factors, including Leadership style and Organizational culture (Indrasari, 2017). According to Thrash (2019), leaders in academic institutions must have different types of leadership skills to become more effective in institutions.

In a university, vice chancellor is responsible for setting the strategic direction of the university, making decisions about resource allocation, overseeing day-to-day operations, and building relationships with internal and external stakeholders (Buccus, 2022). As such the leadership style of a Vice Chancellor is likely to influence the performance of a university. The Vice Chancellor's leadership style can shape the university's vision and strategy, setting the direction for the institution and providing a framework for decision-making. A visionary and strategic Vice Chancellor can inspire faculty and staff to pursue ambitious goals, while a more cautious or incremental approach may lead to more conservative decision-making (Azizi *et al.,* 2022). As pointed out by Khoo, Perotti, Verousis and Watermeyer (2022), the Vice Chancellor's leadership style can influence communication and collaboration within the university, promoting transparency, trust, and teamwork. A collaborative and inclusive leadership style can encourage faculty and staff to work together to achieve shared goals, while a more top-down approach may lead to silos and turf battles. A leader who is skilled at building relationships with donors, government officials, industry partners, and other key stakeholders may enhance the university's reputation and increase its resources, while a more aloof or adversarial approach may damage the university's image and limit its opportunities (Khoo *et al.,* 2022).

Leadership style is one of the most crucial factors for any organization and its employees' performance (Khan et al., 2019). The academy has an essential role to play in the development of socially responsible leaders and socially responsible practices and environments in education (Cauthen, 2020). The need for leaders to make decisions more responsibly is a well-known challenge in today's social context (StachowiczStanusch et al., 2017). As the result of any development leadership surely has a major role, in which all recognized leadership styles have unpredictable results under various settings (Khan *et al.,* 2022). Understanding the impact of leadership on performance is very important as some researchers realize that the main affecting force for improving job performance is leadership (Mahdinezhad, & Suandi, 2019). To make sure the organization success it's necessary to approve the suitable leadership style (Paracha et al., 2022). Vice-chancellors are expected to lead the effort to help their universities grow and respond to significant changes within the system of higher education. As the vision and mission of a new private university is being shaped, the vice-chancellor will need to respond to each situation with appropriate flexibility and responsiveness to change with a multi-frame perspective (Hai, Van & Tuyet, 2022). As the student population grows and issues arising become more complex, there is a greater need to employ multi-faceted leadership styles.

Some of the leadership styles exhibited by leaders include transformational leadership, transactional leadership, laissez-faire leadership, autocratic leadership and democratic leadership. The transformational leader is the one who together with his links is involved to outrun the personal interests, motivating them to go ahead of the benefit of the organization (Antonopoulou et al., 2020). According to Bass and Riggio (2012), transformational (TF) leadership is like a procedure that transforms people. Transformational leadership includes efforts to make changes that boost organizational efficiency and followers' performance, by transforming the self-concepts and personal values (Al-Husseini et al., 2019). This type of leader uses different ways to increase creative and innovative outcomes (Golden, & Shriner, 2019). In this field, Scholars have said that TF leadership produces committed subordinates, enhances performance, and promotes innovative ideas to solve problems (Mittal & Dhar, 2015).

Transactional leadership theory is broadly used in educational institutions (Khan, 2017). Transactional leadership exactly means "exchange" so, this leadership pacts with the trade between

followers and their leaders (Paracha *et al.,* 2012). For individual interests of dependents, leaders are responsible if those are related to the value of the work done by dependents (Purwanto et al., 2020). Transactional leaders use their strengths on work accomplishment and depend on benefits and rewards to enhance the performance of workers (Bass & Avolio, 2000). This leadership is more appropriate for traditional organizations which have more stiff structure working in a steady environment (Rasool et al., 2015). The employees working under transactional leaders perform only according to the expected reward (Meyer & Botha, 2000). It involves the utilization of unforeseen rewards and authorizes to make singular workers pursue their responsibility while adding to organizational objective achievement (Jensen *et al.,* 2019).

According to Avolio and Bass (1995), Laissez-faire leadership style is defined as a lack of leadership and an inactive leadership style. Laissez-Faire (LF) leadership is associated with an inactive style of management (Baig *et al.,* 2019). This leadership style is the ultimate negligent principle which includes a non-interference strategy that allows all employees to have full liberty and has no specific way of attaining goals (Al-Malki, & Juan, 2018). To utilize this leadership style, we get execution in any event, when associations need remedial activities (Baig et al., 2019). In Laissez-faire leadership, where things go their way by themselves (Baig et al., 2019). This type of leadership is appropriate when the employees are professionals in their field (Al-Malki, & Juan, 2018). Laissez-faire leadership is generally recognized as ineffective (Baig *et al.,* 2019). These kinds of leaders might assign tasks, but they do not provide any further leadership such as backing or supervision. Choices are made by others and often laissez-faire leaders quickly lose their dominance in the organization due to inactive leadership (Schimmoeller, 2010). Leaders with this leadership style do not want to become prominent; they do not want to control anything (Baig *et al.,* 2019).

Autocratic leadership style is a type of leadership where the leader has complete control and decision-making power over their team or organization. Autocratic leaders make decisions based on their own opinions and ideas, without consulting their team members or taking their feedback into consideration (Antonopoulou et al., 2020). This style of leadership is often associated with a top-down, hierarchical organizational structure where the leader has absolute authority. In the context of a university, an autocratic leadership style may be appropriate in certain situations, but it is generally not the most effective management approach (Mittal & Dhar, 2015). Overall, while an autocratic leadership style may have some advantages in certain situations, it is generally not the most effective approach in a university setting. A more collaborative approach that involves input from all stakeholders can lead to better decision-making and more positive outcomes.

Democratic leadership is a management approach where the leader involves their subordinates in the decision-making process and values their input and opinions (Aisha, 2022). In a democratic leadership style, the leader still retains ultimate decision-making power, but they encourage participation and input from their team members. According to Mazurek (2022), democratic leadership can be an effective management approach in the context of a university, as it allows for input and collaboration from a diverse group of stakeholders, including faculty, staff, and students. In a democratic leadership environment, individuals are empowered to participate in decision-making and take ownership of their work. This can increase job satisfaction and motivation, leading to better performance and productivity. Agustin, Hidayatulloh and Muhammad (2022) however cautions that, it's important to note that a purely democratic leadership style may not always be appropriate in certain situations, such as in emergencies or when quick decisions need to be made. In such cases, a more autocratic approach may be necessary. Additionally, a

democratic leadership style can be time-consuming and may require significant investment in communication and collaboration efforts to be effective (Agustin *et al.,* 2022).

In Germany, it has been shown that private universities are not subsidized by the state and rely on tuition fees and other sources of revenue to operate (Gewalt, Berger, Krisam & Breuer, 2022). Therefore, effective leadership is critical to ensure that the university is financially stable and can attract and retain talented students and faculty members. Ultimately, the success of a private university in Germany depends on a variety of factors, including the quality of its programs, its reputation, and its ability to adapt to changing market conditions (Gewalt et al., 2022). However, effective leadership is a crucial component of that success, and the leadership style of the Vice Chancellor can have a significant impact on the university's performance.

In Nigeria, private universities have faced various challenges, and poor leadership has been one of the factors that have contributed to their poor performance (Oyadeyi, Fasola & Oladokun, 2022). The leadership style of the Vice Chancellor (VC) is particularly important, as the VC is responsible for providing direction, making strategic decisions, and ensuring that the university achieves its goals. In some cases, VCs in private universities in Nigeria have been accused of favoritism and nepotism in the hiring and promotion of staff. This has led to a lack of merit-based appointments, poor morale among staff, and a decline in the quality of education offered by the university.

In Kenya, poor leadership has been a significant challenge among private universities in Kenya, and several examples highlight this issue (Muema & Pauken, 2022). For instance, Kenya Methodist University one of the private universities in Kenya has been accused of poor leadership, particularly in the areas of financial management and governance. In 2018, the university's Vice Chancellor, was suspended over allegations of financial impropriety (Bagine, Kubai & Njagi, 2022). Additionally, United States International University - Africa another private university in Kenya has faced challenges related to poor leadership. In 2020, the university's Vice Chancellor, resigned after the university's board of trustees accused him of failing to implement a turnaround plan and improve the institution's financial performance (Osano, 2022). Moreover, Mount Kenya University the largest private university in Kenya, with several campuses across the country has faced criticism over its management and governance, with some accusing the institution's leadership of prioritizing profits over quality education. In 2019, the university's founder and Chairman of the Board, stepped down amid allegations of financial impropriety and poor governance.

## 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Poor performance is a significant challenge among private universities in Kenya, and several factors contribute to this issue (Chepkirui & Huang, 2021). The quality of education offered by private universities in Kenya is a significant concern, with many institutions struggling to provide a high standard of teaching and learning; poorly trained and motivated lecturers, inadequate infrastructure, and limited resources all have been cited as factors contributing to this challenge (Mwenda, Kiflemarian & Kimani, 2019). Moreover, according to Purwanto, Wijayanti, Hyun and Asbari (2019) private universities in Kenya have over the years faced financial constraints, which limits their ability to invest in critical areas such as research, infrastructure development, and staff development. This results in a decline in the quality of education offered by the university, leading to poor performance and a decline in enrollment. Furthermore, private universities in Kenya face significant competition from other institutions, including public universities and other private universities; this competition has resulted in pressure to cut costs and increase enrollment, which

then lead to a decline in the quality of education offered by these universities (Purwanto *et al.,* 2019). Poor governance is also a critical issue for private universities in Kenya, and poor governance has led to a lack of accountability and transparency in many of such universities, which impacts the quality of education and the university's reputation.

A number of private universities in Kenya have recorded poor performance over the years; for instance, MKU has been criticized for its poor infrastructure, inadequate staffing, and lack of research funding (Otieno & Njoroge, 2019). The university has also been accused of offering substandard courses. United States International University (USIU)-Africa has been criticized for its high tuition fees, inadequate infrastructure, and poor governance structures and offering substandard courses. Additionally, Kenya Methodist University (KEMU) has been criticized for its poor infrastructure, inadequate staffing, and lack of research funding and offering substandard courses. Private universities in Kenya are facing numerous external challenges due to changes in the environment. According to Odhiambo (2021) high demand for higher education in Kenya has resulted in significant pressure to expand over the recent years and Higher Education Institution (HEI) are facing significant academic and economic challenges. Hence prompting the higher education players to formulate and implement response competitive strategies to mitigate these challenges (Mathooko & Ogutu, 2020). The purpose of this study was to evaluate the relationship between political staff promotions, vice chancellor's leadership style and performance of private universities in Kenya.

## 1.2 Research Objectives

i. To establish the influence of political staff promotion on performance of private universities in Kenya.
ii. To determine the influence of vice-chancellor's leadership style on performance of private universities in Kenya.

## 1.3 Research Questions

i. What is the influence of political staff promotion on performance of private universities in Kenya?
ii. How does Vice-Chancellor's leadership style influence performance of private universities in Kenya?

## 2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Transformational Leadership Theory and Resource Based View Theory. Transformational Leadership Theory suggests that transformational leaders inspire and motivate their followers to achieve common goals, and are able to create a positive work environment that promotes innovation and growth (Siangchokyoo, Klinger & Campion, 2020). The theory suggests that effective leaders adjust their leadership style to fit the situation at hand. In the context of private universities, situational leaders can be effective in dealing with the complex and changing nature of the education industry. They can identify the needs and abilities of their staff, and provide them with the appropriate level of direction, support, and autonomy (Brown, Brown & Nandedkar, 2019). For instance, transformational leader can delegate decision-making authority to a department head who has the necessary expertise to make decisions that affect their department. This leadership style can improve staff morale, productivity, and overall organizational performance. In the context of private universities, transformational leaders can create a culture of excellence that encourages faculty and staff to go beyond their roles and

contribute to the university's mission (Tarker, 2019). They can also promote collaboration among departments and develop long-term strategic plans that help the university to stay competitive in the market. Such leadership style can lead to increased student enrollment, retention rates, and better academic outcomes.

The view of Barney (1991) encouraged Boxall (1996) who attempted to come up with a strategic model as quoted by Derek *et al.,* (2008). They stated that the theory attempts to ensure that available resources are well used to maximum for the advantage of organizations. Ali (2013) in a study in Nigeria stated that criminals have advanced the way they do their criminal activities in all aspects of an economy. Kraaijenbrink, Spender and Groen (2010) added that with educated people, they will be able to be conscious on their security, safety and the condition of environment they live in. Another remedy is to avail employment to the populace for their economic stability. This is in addition to a country having responsible and accountable leaders supported by a good transport system. When these are well established it becomes a threat to a population and police (Kraaijenbrink, Spender & Groen, 2010). Resource Based View (RBV) emphasizes the importance of firm-specific resources and capabilities in achieving sustained competitive advantage. In the context of private universities, the RBV theory can be applied to assess the relationship between leadership style and performance by identifying the key resources and capabilities that leaders bring to the organization.

It is the responsibility of organizations to ensure that their available resources are economically well used and enhance the safety of employees (Underhill, 2002). This depends on whether an employee is employed on a permanent or temporary basis. The author further stated that there are several impacts when employees are hired that include; difficulties due to lack of track hire employees; they are found in diverse work places that include areas of a great risk; administrative tasks are difficult to handle and it is a shift from psychological wellbeing issues and does not deal with employees only.

There is a scenario where the employees who had been employed on a permanent basis were bullying those under hire (Underhill, 2002). Many employees will be sent early to their graves through job stress, fatigue, depression, and with constant headaches. These employees will equate themselves to prisoners especially when performing temporary or permanent jobs that they feel to be undesired work. The resource based view theory is suitable for the study for it was proved useful by later studies (Lok & Crawford, 2004). Resource based view (RBV) theory suggests that a firm's resources must be valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable to achieve sustained competitive advantage. In the context of private universities, leaders can be a valuable resource, and their leadership style can have a significant impact on the university's performance. By identifying the key leadership resources such as experience, expertise, and leadership skills, the RBV theory can help assess the impact of different leadership styles on the university's performance. Thus theory was found to be relevant to the current study since it can be applied to assess the relationship between leadership style and performance of private universities in Kenya by identifying key leadership resources, assessing the impact of leadership style on resource utilization, and evaluating the impact of leadership style on organizational capabilities.

## 2.2 Empirical Review

### 2.2.1 Political Staff Promotion and Performance

Transformational leadership is one of the leadership styles that approach by demonstrating the behaviour and abilities of leaders who inspire followers so that employees can work well and

produce the desired performance. Transformational leadership is characterized by the ability of a leader who can understand the needs of his followers and is able to motivate his followers (Asbari, Purwanto, 2019; Asbari *et al.,* 2020; Asbari, Purwanto, & Budi, 2020; Prameswari et al., 2020; Purwanto *et al.,* 2019; Purwanto, Asbari, *et al.,* 2020; Purwanto, Putri *et al.,* 2020). Transformational leadership is a leader who is seen as someone who is able to exert a great effect on his followers so as to create a situation that inspires his followers to achieve an organizational goal that goes beyond the desires of their leaders (Wexley & Yukl, 1977). Transformational leaders are usually able to generate a sense of self-confidence (intrinsic motivation), commitment, high loyalty and develop a leadership spirit in others (Robbins & Judge, 2015).

Nurunnabi (2016) assessed the relationship between political governance and ability of private universities in developing countries with reference to Bangladesh. The study was motivated by scarcity of research in governance and accountability in private higher education in developing countries, explore the tensions surrounding good governance in legitimizing accountability in private universities in developing countries with reference to Bangladesh. The study adopted a mixed methods design and a quantitative survey of 1,576 students from all 79 private universities, qualitative interviews with 23 stakeholders; and policy documents including the Private University Acts, the World Bank Report and newspapers (1992-2015) were evaluated. The study found that the coercive power of the state becomes powerless since the board of trustees ultimately enjoys political power and "does whatever it can." The lack of coordination of the academic oligarchy (e.g. professors and academics) and market forces (represented by students) by the board of trustees creates a paradox of governance and hence a decoupling of formal policies and actual practice. The findings had major policy implications for local and international policymakers for improving good governance in private universities in developing countries.

Babagana (2022) assessed the impact of organisational politics on performance management in public higher education institutions in Nigeria. This study quantitatively examined and explored a small sample of data on the relationship between organisational politics and performance management systems in Nigeria. Survey method was adopted to collect data from a higher education institution exploiting purposive convenience sampling technique. Validity and reliability of the instrument were examined through panel of experts and a small sample of respondents. Data was analysed using PLS 3. Results confirmed the validity and reliability of the instrument adapted in the pilot study. A larger sample size was recommended for future study to empirically determine relationship among construct.

A study by Okeke and Mbah (2019) aimed at investigating the effect of cultural animosity, pay and promotion, religious diversity and power tussle on employee performance. Relevant literature on organizational politics and employee performance was reviewed under conceptual framework, theoretical framework, and empirical review. The research work was anchored on Just World Theory. Survey research design was implemented and the population of the study comprised 5403 respondents. The statistical formula devised by Fawett (1997) and Nwana's (1992), was employed to arrive at a sample size of 540. The study established that there was a positive relationship between Cultural animosity and organizational performance in tertiary institutions under study. Pay and promotion had a positive relationship on employee performance in tertiary institutions under study. Moreover, religious diversity had a positive relationship on employee performance in tertiary institutions under study. The study concluded that organizational politics has a positive relationship on employee performance in tertiary institutions particularly in Anambra State. The study recommended that organizations should understand the disparities in the culture of

employees, and how the culture replicates the reactions and behaviour of the employees, and they should ensure equal promotional opportunities and appropriate pay structure including pay performance and other bonuses and when in place reduces the negative effects of political behaviour.

### 2.2.2 Leadership Style on Performance

When leaders are known on how they lead others, it becomes their own traditional style of leadership (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014). They posited that there are several benefits in good leadership that include a reduction at the rate of employees leaving work and organizations shall increase their production enabling employees to reach their business targets. It will also help and motivate employees at work that will lead to high job performance and production. There are several leadership styles that have been outlined next by these scholars (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014). First are transformational leaders whose aim is to change or transform their followers to reach greater heights in life. Their aim is to ensure that the targets they set are met through their leadership styles. A second leadership style is called transactional. Here the aim of leaders is to meet the needs of employees in all aspects and ensure that work smoothly operates without any interruptions. They do that by ensuring that employees and employers operate on a contract. Finally, we have charismatic leaders whose lifestyles involve the mobilizing of followers through nice speeches.

It has been found out through research that good leaders lead others using many different styles (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2020). They posited that with a good leadership style in place, it will benefit employees. Employers will experience low employee turnover, high production and performance enhanced. It has also been found out that the health and safety of police officers affect their job performance by 95% (Nderi & Kirai, 2017). Other scholars also stated that there are other factors that affect police performance that include their housing conditions (98%), rewarding systems (85%) with a mean of 1.67, standard deviation of 1.32 and communication that has 52% of influence on performance. Destructive leadership enhanced by unsatisfied leaders is also dangerous for organizations (Krasikova, Green & LeBreton, 2019).

Mwakasangula *et al.,* (2015) examined the effect of leadership behaviour on good governance using a cross-sectional design covering Rungwe and Babati Districts in Tanzania using a sample size of 125 households. The effect of leadership behaviour was measured based on participation, which is an aspect of good governance. The study results indicated a strong relationship between transformational leadership behaviour and effective villagers' participation in different development activities. For instance, in villages where the leaders were said to be charismatic and supportive, the villagers' participation in decision-making processes and funds mobilization for development projects such as schools, and dispensaries construction were found to have been effective and efficient. Men and Stacks (2013) investigated the effect that styles of leadership and empowerment of employees have on perceived reputation of the organization through hypothesized model testing. They carried out a quantitative survey on-line comprising 700 randomly selected employees ailing from work units that were diverse in a Fortune 500 company in the U.S. The results showed that, the way employees perceive organizational reputation is absolutely influenced by transformational leadership style, not just indirectly but also directly through employee empowerment. Transactional style that is characterized by contingent reward behaviour had a direct significant negative impact on how employees perceive organizational reputation.

Nurtjahjani, Batilmurik, Puspita and Fanggidae (2022) while examining the relationship between transformational leadership and work engagement and the moderated mediation roles of psychological ownership and belief in just world indicated that transformational leadership impacts follower more positively in their work engagement. The data were collected from 183 lecturers who teach in an Indonesian university. The questionnaires covered transformational leadership, psychological ownership, belief in just world and work engagement. The collected data were examined with structural equation model analysis. The study indicated a significant moderated mediation index, which indicated that the relationship between transformational leadership and work engagement was mediated by psychological ownership and is moderated by belief in just world.

Yuan, Kong, Baum, Liu, Liu, Bu and Yin (2022) assessed the relationship between transformational leadership and trust in leadership and employee commitment. The purpose of the study was to explore the effects of leadership style and trust in leadership on employees' affective commitment under the epidemic situation. A total of 580 valid questionnaires were collected online targeting the hospitality and tourism employees working from home during the particular period of the COVID-19 Coronavirus crisis. Structural equation modeling was used to analyze the data with AMOS software. The findings indicated that perceived transformational leadership was a positive predictor of trust in leadership and affective commitment. In addition to the positive contribution to commitment, trust in leadership also mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment. The findings indicated that specifically, leadership was significant determinant of employee engagement. The results of the correlation and cross-tabulation tests showed that transformational leadership and employee engagement had no statistically significant positive linear association between them.

Broyles (2022) argued that the major characteristic defining laissez-faire leadership style is where the leader fails to respond to various potential stimuli in various situations. Laissez-faire style of leadership is not intentional and motivated in terms of appearance. Simply, laissez-*faire* leadership style is whereby the leader fails to respond to the needs of subordinates and their performance. It can be seen as a neutral incentive, which takes place under both subordinate performances, whether good or bad. They note that, *laissez-faire* leadership has acquired less attention compared to the three transactional leadership dimensions of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). The MLQ *laissez-faire* measure involves several types of non-leadership (i.e., resisting expressing views, being absent when needed, avoiding responsibility, failure to respond to problems, delaying responses and failing to follow up (Broyles, 2022).

The transforming influence occurs through behaviours such as role modelling, mentoring, empowering and trust (Samuel & Engelbrecht, 2021). Leaders high in persuasive mapping are skilled at mapping issues and conceptualizing greater possibilities and are compelling when articulating these opportunities. Persuasive mapping describes the extent that leaders use sound reasoning and mental frameworks to encourage others to visualize the organization's future and are persuasive, offering compelling reasons to get others to do things (Hasanuddin et al., 2021). Wisdom is a combination of awareness of surroundings and anticipation of consequences where leaders are adept at picking up cues from the environment and understanding their implications. Such leaders are good at combining the height of knowledge and utility (Hasanuddin *et al.,* 2021).

### 3.0 Research methodology

This study employed a descriptive research design. The descriptive research design was used because the study sought to gather quantitative data that describe the nature and the influence of political staff promotions, vice chancellor's leadership style on performance of private universities in Kenya. This study targeted all the private universities in Kenya. The units of observation comprised Vice chancellors (VCs), the deans and lecturers. The study purposively selected five (5) private universities including and identified by code K 1 to K V. These five universities were purposively selected because they are the main private universities in Kenya with the largest number of students. In addition, the five universities were chartered more than ten years ago and therefore there was ease of obtaining data with regards to leadership style and political promotion of staff.

From each of the five universities, one VC, two deans and 5 lecturers were purposively selected to take part in this study. This study used both questionnaire and interview guide to collect primary data. The questionnaires were administered to the lecturers and the deans, while interview guide was administered to the VCs. The quantitative data collected using the questionnaire was analyzed with the aid of SPSS. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. The qualitative data gathered using interviews was analyzed thematically using content analysis. The findings were presented in tables.

### 4.0 Findings and Discussion

### 4.1 Response Rate and Demographic Information

A total of 35 respondents took part in the study comprising 5 deans, 25 lecturers and 5 VCs. Out of these, 25 deans and lecturers successfully filled the questionnaires and returned yielding a response rate of 83.3 percent. In addition, all the 5 VCs took part in the interview yielding a response rate of 100 percent. Demographic information results revealed a balanced gender representation among the participants, with a slight male majority (14, 56%) compared to females (11, 44%). The age distribution of the respondents was found to be skewed towards the middle age groups, with the majority of the respondents falling within the 36–45 years age bracket (11, 44%) and 46–55 years (11, 44%) brackets. This indicates that the majority of the respondents are in the prime of their careers, potentially bringing a wealth of experience and stability to their roles. Regarding educational attainment and work experience, the results revealed that there was a high level of academic achievement among the participants, with a significant majority holding PhD degrees (16, 64%). This reflects a highly educated workforce within the private universities, which potentially correlate with the institutions' performance and decision-making processes. In terms of work experience, there was a clear predominance of long-term professionals, with most respondents having over 15 years of experience (16, 64%). This suggests that the leadership and staff within these universities are not only highly educated but also seasoned practitioners in their fields, which is likely to have impact on the universities' operational effectiveness and strategic direction.

### 4.2 Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis was used to describe the basic features of the data under study as they provide summaries about the sample and its measures because they provide simple summaries about the sample and the measures. Descriptive analysis simply forms the basis of every quantitative

analysis of data and includes the mean and standard deviation (Conradie & Paduri 2014). Descriptive statistics results of the study variables are presented and discussed below.

### 4.2.1 Descriptive Statistics on Political Staff Promotion

The study sought to establish the influence of political staff promotion on performance of private universities in Kenya. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics results.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Political Staff Promotion**

| Statement | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree | Mean | Std. Dev. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I achieve my current position at the university out of pure hard work and not because of my political stand | 12.00% | 16.00% | 16.00% | 44.00% | 12.00% | 3.28 | 1.24 |
| Political affiliation is not a major criteria used by the university to evaluate faculty members for promotion. | 24.00% | 4.00% | 36.00% | 28.00% | 8.00% | 2.92 | 1.29 |
| My research and teaching experience align with the university's expectations for promotion but I have never been promoted | 8.00% | 20.00% | 20.00% | 48.00% | 4.00% | 3.2 | 1.08 |
| My VC totally believes that political leaning should not be considered in promotion decisions. | 12.00% | 8.00% | 40.00% | 20.00% | 20.00% | 3.28 | 1.24 |
| I don't feel comfortable discussing my political beliefs with my colleagues and superiors at the university. | 8.00% | 20.00% | 28.00% | 24.00% | 20.00% | 3.28 | 1.24 |
| My political leaning has never played any role in my promotion. | 12.00% | 4.00% | 32.00% | 28.00% | 24.00% | 3.48 | 1.26 |
| My university provides equal opportunities for promotion regardless of political leaning. | 8.00% | 28.00% | 24.00% | 24.00% | 16.00% | 3.12 | 1.24 |
| The management of our university promotes diversity and inclusivity among faculty members. | 12.00% | 12.00% | 28.00% | 36.00% | 12.00% | 3.24 | 1.2 |
| I have personally witnessed instances where political leaning has influenced promotion decisions at the university. | 0.00% | 20.00% | 32.00% | 40.00% | 8.00% | 3.36 | 0.91 |
| To a large extent I believe that political leaning influences promotion decisions at my university. | 16.00% | 4.00% | 28.00% | 20.00% | 32.00% | 3.48 | 1.42 |

The results in Table 1 shows that majority of respondents agreed (44%) that their current positions were achieved through hard work rather than political stance, resulting in a mean score of 3.28 with a standard deviation of 1.24. This suggests a general belief in meritocracy, though the presence of a notable percentage of respondents who were neutral or disagreed points to some underlying concerns about the influence of politics in academic advancements. Similarly, a significant portion of the participants (48%) felt that despite their research and teaching

experiences aligning with university expectations, they had not been promoted, indicating potential discrepancies in promotion practices with a mean score of 3.2 and a standard deviation of 1.08. Regarding the role of political leanings in promotion decisions, a considerable number of respondents (40%) witnessed instances where political affiliations influenced promotions, with a mean score of 3.36 and a lower standard deviation of 0.91, indicating a tighter consensus around this perception.

Contrastingly, a significant majority of respondents (36%) remained neutral on whether political affiliation is a major criterion for faculty evaluation, with the mean score at 2.92 and a standard deviation of 1.29. This ambiguity might reflect an uncertain environment regarding promotion criteria within these institutions. The belief that political leaning should not be considered in promotion decisions was met with mixed reactions, with a significant portion of respondents (40%) remaining neutral, yielding a mean score of 3.28 and a standard deviation of 1.24. This indicates a divided perception on the role of political neutrality in promotion decisions. Discomfort in discussing political beliefs with colleagues and superiors saw 28% of respondents staying neutral, but a significant percentage either agreed or strongly agreed (44% combined), reflecting concerns about openness in political discussions, with the mean score and standard deviation mirroring the previous item at 3.28 and 1.24, respectively.

On the direct influence of political leaning on promotions, the responses were again mixed, with the highest agreement found in the strong agreement category (24%), culminating in a mean score of 3.48 and a standard deviation of 1.26. This suggests a perception of political bias in promotions among a notable portion of the faculty. The statement on equal promotion opportunities regardless of political leaning saw 28% disagreeing, pointing towards skepticism about fairness in promotions, with a mean of 3.12 and a standard deviation of 1.24. Respondents' views on the promotion of diversity and inclusivity among faculty members were more positive, with the majority agreeing (36%), giving a mean of 3.24 and a standard deviation of 1.2, suggesting a somewhat positive outlook on institutional efforts towards inclusivity.

Witnessed instances where political leaning influenced promotions had 40% agreeing, indicating firsthand observations of political bias, with a mean of 3.36 and the lowest standard deviation of 0.91, hinting at a more consistent experience among respondents. Furthermore, 32% strongly agreed that political leaning plays a significant role in promotion decisions within their universities, indicated by the highest mean score of 3.48 and the largest standard deviation of 1.42 in the dataset. This reflects a serious concern among the lecturers and deans about the impact of political biases on career progression, highlighting a potential challenge to the principles of fairness and inclusivity in the academic environment of private universities in Kenya. These findings agrees with findings of study by Babagana (2022) on the impact of organizational politics on performance management in public higher education institutions in Nigeria, providing empirical evidence of the relationship between politics and performance management systems. Okeke and Mbah (2019) also contribute to the understanding of organizational politics and its effects on employee performance in tertiary institutions, emphasizing cultural factors, pay, promotion, and religious diversity. These authors collectively provide a deeper understanding of analysis that echo the findings of the primary study on the role of meritocracy and political influences in academic promotions within private universities in Kenya.

**Thematic Analysis**

In an interview, the VCs were asked to describe their leadership style and how it has evolved over time. They indicated that;

> *Over time, my leadership style has evolved from being predominantly directive to more collaborative and transformational. Initially, I focused on setting clear goals and expecting team members to follow through. However, I've learned the importance of engaging with my team, soliciting their input, and fostering an environment where innovation and creativity are encouraged. This shift has not only improved our collective problem-solving capabilities but also enhanced the sense of ownership and commitment among the team.*

The KII were also asked to indicate how they were approaching building and maintaining relationships with university leadership teams. They explained that:

> *Building and maintaining relationships with the university leadership team is fundamental to our collective success. I approach this by fostering open communication, ensuring regular and structured meetings for strategic discussions, and creating informal opportunities for interaction. Trust and respect are crucial, so I make a concerted effort to understand the individual goals and challenges of team members and support them in achieving their objectives.*

**4.2.2 Descriptive Statistics on Leadership Style**

The study sought to determine the influence of vice-chancellor's leadership style on performance of private universities in Kenya. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics results.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Leadership Style**

| Statement | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree | Mean | Std. Dev. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| VC leadership has a positive effect on our university's performance. | 4.00% | 16.00% | 4.00% | 40.00% | 36.00% | 3.88 | 1.2 |
| Our VC encourages collaboration and teamwork among staff and faculty. | 12.00% | 12.00% | 28.00% | 28.00% | 20.00% | 3.32 | 1.28 |
| Our VC fosters a positive work environment and culture among staff and faculty. | 8.00% | 24.00% | 16.00% | 32.00% | 20.00% | 3.32 | 1.28 |
| Our VC enables the university to adapt to changing circumstances and needs. | 8.00% | 16.00% | 8.00% | 52.00% | 16.00% | 3.52 | 1.19 |
| Our VC leadership is essential for ensuring the success of the university in the current digital age. | 4.00% | 12.00% | 12.00% | 52.00% | 20.00% | 3.72 | 1.06 |
| Our VC provides a sense of direction and purpose for the university. | 12.00% | 4.00% | 20.00% | 40.00% | 24.00% | 3.6 | 1.26 |
| Our VC is very effective in promoting and implementing policies that benefit the university and its stakeholders. | 12.00% | 16.00% | 20.00% | 32.00% | 20.00% | 3.32 | 1.31 |
| Our VC is receptive to feedback and suggestions from faculty members and other stakeholders. | 12.00% | 28.00% | 12.00% | 28.00% | 20.00% | 3.16 | 1.37 |
| Our VC is very effective in management of conflicts and challenges within the university community. | 12.00% | 16.00% | 24.00% | 32.00% | 16.00% | 3.24 | 1.27 |
| Our VC's to a very great extent is supportive of the academic and research pursuits of the university. | 12.00% | 16.00% | 16.00% | 28.00% | 28.00% | 3.44 | 1.39 |

The results in Table 2 shows that majority of respondents (76%) agreed that the vice-chancellor's leadership has a beneficial impact on the university's performance, signaling a strong consensus on the importance of effective leadership for institutional success. This high level of agreement, reflected in a mean of 3.88 and a standard deviation of 1.2, underscores the pivotal role that leadership quality plays in driving positive outcomes in the educational sector. When it comes to fostering collaboration and teamwork, the agreement was notably lower, with 48% acknowledging the vice-chancellor's efforts in this area. This suggests a potential area for improvement, as fostering a collaborative environment is essential for academic innovation and staff satisfaction.

The mean score of 3.32 and a standard deviation of 1.28 indicate moderate agreement among participants, highlighting the variability in perceptions regarding the promotion of teamwork within the institution. About 52% of the participants recognized the vice-chancellor's role in creating a positive work environment and culture, which is critical for maintaining high morale and productivity among faculty and staff. This level of agreement, along with a mean of 3.32 and a standard deviation of 1.28, suggests that while there is recognition of efforts to enhance the workplace culture, there may still be room for further development in this area. Adaptability to changing circumstances and needs was acknowledged by 68% of respondents, indicating a relatively strong agreement on the vice-chancellor's ability to guide the university through transitions and challenges. This adaptability is crucial in today's rapidly changing educational landscape, and a mean of 3.52 with a standard deviation of 1.19 reflects a good level of confidence in the vice-chancellor's leadership in this regard.

Furthermore, 72% agreed that the vice-chancellor's leadership is essential for the university's success in the current digital age. This high level of agreement, along with a mean score of 3.72 and a standard deviation of 1.06, emphasizes the importance of visionary leadership in navigating the complexities of digital transformation in education. The study also revealed that 64% of respondents believe the vice-chancellor provides a clear sense of direction and purpose, essential for strategic focus and institutional coherence. However, the effectiveness in promoting and implementing beneficial policies was viewed slightly less positively, with 52% in agreement, suggesting that policy development and execution might be areas where the vice-chancellor could focus more attention. Interestingly, the vice-chancellor's receptiveness to feedback was the least positively viewed aspect, with only 48% in agreement. This indicates a potential gap in communication and openness, which could be critical for fostering a more inclusive and responsive administrative culture. In managing conflicts and challenges within the university, 48% of participants recognized the vice-chancellor's effectiveness, suggesting moderate agreement but also indicating room for improvement in conflict resolution and crisis management. Moreover, majority (56%) of respondents felt the vice-chancellor is supportive of academic and research pursuits, which is fundamental for the university's intellectual growth and innovation. This support is crucial for attracting and retaining academic talent and for fostering a vibrant research environment.

These findings are in agreement with the findings of a study by Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2014, 2020), who posit the multidimensional benefits of adept leadership, including heightened productivity and achievement of organizational goals, emphasizing the transformative potential of leadership styles such as transformational and transactional leadership in fostering an environment conducive to high performance. Further, the study findings are consistent with assertions by Mwakasangula *et al.* (2015) and Men and Stacks (2013), who addressed and explained the role of leadership behavior and employee empowerment in enhancing organizational reputation and fostering effective participation in development activities, respectively. These corroborations points to the quintessential role of visionary and transformative leadership in navigating the complexities of academic governance and fostering a culture of excellence and collaboration within higher education institutions.

**Thematic Analysis**

In an interview, the KII who were the VCs were asked to describe a time when they had to navigate a particularly difficult situation with a university investment, and how they approached it. They explained that:

> *Navigating difficult situations with university investments requires a balanced approach. A particularly challenging scenario involved an investment that wasn't performing as expected and was met with resistance from various stakeholders. I approached this by gathering extensive input, assessing our options, and ultimately making a decision that aligned with our long-term strategic goals, even though it was tough in the short term. Open communication and transparency about the decision-making process were key in managing this situation.*

In addition, the VCs indicated that:

> *Staying up-to-date on industry trends is vital in the rapidly changing landscape of higher education. I regularly read industry publications, attend conferences, and participate in professional networks. Incorporating this knowledge into our investment strategy involves constant learning and adaptability, ensuring that our decisions are forward-thinking and reflective of emerging trends and technologies.*

> *As a leader, I prioritize integrity, transparency, and a commitment to excellence. These values are non-negotiable and form the foundation of our decision-making processes and interactions with all stakeholders. By adhering to these principles, I aim to foster a culture of trust and high performance within the university.*

### 4.2.3 Descriptive Statistics on Performance

Table 3 shows descriptive statistics on performance which is the dependent variable.

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on Performance**

| Statement | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree | Mean | Std. Dev. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Our university has been recording constant increase in enrollment for the past five tears. | 4.00% | 16.00% | 16.00% | 44.00% | 20.00% | 3.6 | 1.12 |
| The amount our university get as grants has increased over the past. | 32.00% | 24.00% | 28.00% | 8.00% | 8.00% | 2.36 | 1.25 |
| Our university has been among the best in research among private universities in Kenya. | 20.00% | 28.00% | 28.00% | 24.00% | 0.00% | 2.56 | 1.08 |
| Our university has grown over the past 5 years and now we have satellite campuses. | 24.00% | 28.00% | 28.00% | 12.00% | 8.00% | 2.52 | 1.23 |
| Our university is among the private universities with the highest number of government sponsored students. | 36.00% | 28.00% | 16.00% | 16.00% | 4.00% | 2.24 | 1.23 |
| Our university has the best teaching. | 8.00% | 12.00% | 16.00% | 52.00% | 12.00% | 3.48 | 1.12 |

The results in Table 3 shows that majority of respondents (64%) agreed that their university has seen a constant increase in enrollment over the past five years, indicating a positive trend in attracting students, which reflects favorably on the institution's appeal and perceived quality of education. This perspective is supported by a mean score of 3.6 and a standard deviation of 1.12, suggesting a strong agreement among participants on this aspect of performance. However, the scenario appears less optimistic when it comes to financial growth through grants, with only 16%

of respondents agreeing that the amount the university receives as grants has increased. This is illustrated by a relatively low mean of 2.36 and a standard deviation of 1.25, indicating significant concerns or perceived stagnation in this area of university funding. This being an area linked to proposal writing and research work by faculty, more so requiring team work and collaboration alongside VCs support, hence a serious problem to be looked at for solution.

In terms of research reputation among private universities in Kenya, only 24% of respondents felt that their university was among the best. This modest agreement, reflected in a mean of 2.56 and a standard deviation of 1.08, suggests that there might be room for improvement in research output or recognition. Regarding physical expansion, only 20% agreed that the university has grown to have satellite campuses over the past five years, as indicated by a mean of 2.52 and a standard deviation of 1.23. This points to a perceived slow pace in infrastructural growth or expansion of the university's physical presence. When considering the number of government-sponsored students, a low agreement of 20% suggests that the university may not be among the top choices for government sponsorship, with a mean score of 2.24 and a standard deviation of 1.23. This could reflect on the university's market positioning and competitiveness.

Moreover, majority (64%) of the respondents agreed that the university has the best teaching quality. This high level of agreement, with a mean of 3.48 and a standard deviation of 1.12, highlights teaching excellence as a strong point for the institution, potentially contributing to its attractiveness to prospective students and overall academic reputation. These findings indicate varied perceptions of the university's performance across different metrics. While there is a strong agreement on teaching quality and enrollment growth, there are evident concerns about financial growth through grants, research standing, infrastructural expansion, and the attraction of government-sponsored students. These areas present opportunities for strategic focus and improvement to enhance the overall performance and competitiveness of the university in the private education sector in Kenya.

### 4.3 Regression Analysis

The study conducted regression analysis to assess the relationship between political staff promotions, vice chancellor's leadership style and performance of private universities in Kenya. Tables 4, 5 and 6 present the model summary, ANOVA, and regression of coefficient results respectively.

**Table 4: Model Summary**

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | .562a | 0.315 | 0.253 | 0.70961 |

a Predictors: (Constant), Leadership Style, Political Staff Promotion

The results in Table 4 show that the coefficient of determination (R squared) is 0.315 and adjusted R squared of 0.253 at 95% significance level. This implies that leadership style, political staff promotion jointly explains 31.5 percent of the variation in performance of private universities in Kenya. The remaining 68.5 percent of the variation in the performance of these universities can be explained by other factors which were not part of the current model.

**Table 5: ANOVA**

| Model | | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Regression | 5.104 | 2 | 2.552 | 5.068 | .015[b] |
| 1 | Residual | 11.078 | 22 | 0.504 | | |
| | Total | 16.182 | 24 | | | |

a. Dependent Variable: Performance
b. Predictors: (Constant), Leadership Style, Political Staff Promotion

The ANOVA results in Table 5 show that the model was statistically significant in explaining the influence of political staff promotions and vice chancellor's leadership style on performance of private universities in Kenya and it is indicated by a p-value of 0.015<0.05.

**Table 6: Regression Coefficients**

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | T | Sig. |
| | (Constant) | 1.722 | 0.958 | | 1.797 | 0.086 |
| 1 | Political Staff Promotion | -0.174 | 0.398 | -0.11 | -0.437 | 0.666 |
| | Leadership Style | 0.475 | 0.189 | 0.635 | 2.513 | 0.020 |

a. Dependent Variable: Performance

The regression model therefore became;

**$Y = 1.722 - 0.174X_1 + 0.475X_2$**

Where:
Y= Performance
$X_1$= Political Staff Promotion
$X_2$= Leadership Style

Regression coefficients in Table 5 show that political staff promotions did not significantly affect university performance, with a p-value of 0.666 indicating no clear influence (B = -0.174, P-value. = 0.666). In contrast, the vice chancellor's leadership style demonstrated a significant positive relationship with performance, where an improvement in leadership style was associated with better performance outcomes (B = 0.475, P-value. = 0.020). This finding indicates the impact that effective leadership can have on the success and efficiency of private universities in Kenya, emphasizing the critical importance of leadership in the educational sector. The nonsignificant results for political staff promotions suggest that such practices may not play a significant role in determining university performance within the Kenyan context, pointing to the value of concentrating on leadership development to enhance institutional performance.

These findings are consistent with studies by previous authors such as Asbari and Purwanto (2019), Asbari et al. (2020) and Purwanto, Asbari *et al.* (2020) who have also delved into transformational leadership and its impact on organizational performance, highlighting the potential for leaders to motivate and influence their followers positively. A study by Wexley and Yukl (1977), and Robbins and Judge (2015) provide foundational analysis into transformational leadership's role in

creating motivation, commitment, and leadership development among followers. Moreover, study by Nurunnabi (2016) provides an in-depth analysis of political governance in private universities in developing countries, particularly Bangladesh, shedding light on the complexities of governance and the influence of political power in academic settings.

Moreover, these results are consistent with findings by studies conducted by Nurtjahjani *et al.* (2022) and Yuan et al. (2022), who highlight the significant impact of transformational leadership on work engagement and the mediating role of psychological ownership and trust in leadership on organizational commitment. These studies collectively affirm the transformative power of leadership in galvanizing employee engagement and commitment, crucial for navigating the evolving challenges in the educational sector. However, the identified gaps in policy implementation, receptiveness to feedback, and conflict management, as reflected in the respondents' views, draw attention to the nuanced challenges within leadership roles, akin to the concerns raised by Krasikova, Green and LeBreton (2019) regarding the negative effects of destructive leadership. The understanding of leadership efficacy, as demonstrated by the impact of leadership styles across different domains of university governance, underlines the complexity of leadership in higher education and the imperative for continuous development and adaptability to foster a thriving academic ecosystem.

## 5.0 Conclusion

This study concludes that the influence of political staff promotions on the performance of private universities in Kenya is not significant. Despite concerns raised by deans and staff regarding the impact of political affiliations on promotion decisions, the regression analysis revealed that such practices do not substantially affect the overall performance of these institutions. The study also concludes that while political affiliations might be a consideration in the academic environment, they do not play significant role in shaping the performance outcomes of private universities in Kenya. Conversely, the study finds a significant positive relationship between the vice chancellor's leadership style and the performance of private universities in Kenya.

An improvement in leadership style is associated with better performance outcomes. This highlights the critical role of effective leadership in driving the success and efficiency of educational institutions. The descriptive statistics further reinforce the importance of leadership, showing a strong agreement among respondents that the vice chancellor's positive leadership has a beneficial impact on the university's performance. This consensus underscores the need for private universities in Kenya to focus on developing and sustaining effective leadership to enhance their performance and competitiveness in the education sector.

Finally, the study concludes that there exists negligible impact of political staff promotions on university performance and the paramount importance of leadership quality in private universities in Kenya. It suggests that while political considerations may exist within the academic sphere, they do not significantly influence institutional performance. Instead, the findings advocate for a greater emphasis on leadership development, alongside addressing identified areas for improvement in performance metrics, to enhance the effectiveness, appeal, and competitiveness of private universities in the region. This holistic approach are likely to contribute to creating a more conducive environment for academic excellence and operational efficiency in Kenya's higher education sector.

## 6.0 Recommendations

In view of the findings and conclusions, this study recommends that private universities in Kenya prioritize leadership development programs for their vice chancellors and other key management staff. Given the significant positive impact of leadership style on university performance, institutions should invest in training that enhances leadership skills, such as strategic decision-making, effective communication, and emotional intelligence. These programs should include workshops, seminars, and mentoring opportunities, focusing on the adoption of leadership styles that foster collaboration, innovation, and adaptability to change. By strengthening the leadership capabilities of their vice chancellors, universities are able to improve their overall performance and create a more supportive and productive academic environment.

Furthermore, the study suggests that while political staff promotions do not significantly impact university performance, the perception of their influence could still affect morale and the sense of fairness within the academic community. To address this, universities should strive for transparency and fairness in their promotion processes. Clear criteria for promotion, based on merit and professional achievements, should be communicated and consistently applied. Establishing independent review panels or committees that include a diverse group of faculty members might also help to mitigate concerns about political bias and ensure that promotions are perceived as fair and based on objective assessments of performance and contributions to the university.

Moreover, the mixed perceptions regarding financial growth through grants, research standing, and infrastructural expansion highlight the need for a strategic approach to resource allocation and infrastructure development. Universities should consider adopting comprehensive strategic plans that focus on enhancing research capacity, seeking alternative funding sources, and expanding physical infrastructure to support growth. This should involve creating partnerships with industry, government, and international organizations to increase research funding and opportunities. Additionally, developing a clear roadmap for infrastructural development, including the expansion of facilities and technology upgrades, can support the university's long-term growth and adaptability to the evolving educational environment.

Finally, given the strong agreement on the quality of teaching and its positive impact on university performance, institutions should continue to emphasize teaching excellence. This should include regular professional development opportunities for faculty, innovative teaching methods, and the integration of technology in the classroom. Recognizing and rewarding outstanding teaching can also motivate faculty members to maintain high standards. By prioritizing teaching quality, universities can enhance student learning experiences and outcomes, contributing to their reputation and attractiveness to prospective students.

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