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Influence of Laissez-Faire Leadership on Employee Performance in Faith-Based Institutions of Higher Learning in the Rift Valley Region, Kenya

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Abstract: *Leadership has been widely conceptualized as the process through which an individual or group influences others toward the attainment of specific organizational goals. The main objective of this study was to examine the relationship between laissez-faire leadership and employee performance in faith-based institutions of higher learning in Rift Valley Region, Kenya. The population of this study was employees of the faith-based institutions of higher learning in Rift Valley region. This study involved a multistage sampling to purposively select the counties, institutions and randomly select the respondents. A total of 138 of the 189 questionnaires distributed during data collection were returned, giving an overall return rate of 73%. Respondents perceived themselves as demonstrating good quality of work and strong time management practices. For laissez-faire practices, respondents generally agreed that employee autonomy and limited supervision were practiced in the institutions. To test the hypothesis, the researcher used correlation analysis to determine the relationship between employee performance and laissez-faire practices. From the analysis, the study established a positive, significant but weak relationship between limited supervision, supervisor's responsibility and employee performance. The study did not establish any relationship between employee autonomy and employee performance. The study recommends that faith-based institutions should not rely on autonomy alone but should combine employee independence with clear goals, accountability, feedback, and responsible supervision.*

Keywords: *Employee performance, Laissez-faire, Leadership, Employee autonomy, Limited supervision, Supervision responsibility.*

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1 Introduction

Leadership has been widely conceptualized as the process through which an individual or group influences others toward the attainment of specific organizational goals (Northouse, 2014). Within institutions, leadership plays a critical role in directing, guiding, and motivating employees to achieve both individual and organizational objectives (Oc, 2018). Effective leadership further involves the establishment of policies, systems, and administrative structures that facilitate informed decision-making regarding employee development, motivation, and reward management, all of which contribute to improved organizational performance (Hallinger, 2018). As such, the leadership approach adopted by an institution significantly determines employee outcomes and overall institutional effectiveness.

Different leadership styles exert varying relationship on employee performance. Among these, the laissez-faire leadership style has attracted considerable attention due to its distinct characteristics and controversial outcomes. Laissez-faire leadership is generally defined as a passive and non-interventionist leadership approach, where leaders avoid decision-making, provide minimal supervision, and delay responses to organizational issues. Under this style, leaders tend to withdraw from active involvement, leaving employees to operate independently without consistent guidance or feedback

(Dastane, 2020; Donkor & Zhou, 2020; Silva & Mendis, 2017).

While laissez-faire leadership is sometimes related with employee autonomy and freedom, it is important to distinguish it from empowering leadership. Empowering leadership involves deliberate efforts by leaders to support, guide, and develop employees while granting them autonomy within clearly defined structures. In contrast, laissez-faire leadership is characterized by passive avoidance, where autonomy arises not as a result of intentional empowerment, but due to the absence of active leadership. This distinction is critical for ensuring conceptual clarity. Therefore, this study adopts the perspective of laissez-faire leadership as a passive leadership style rather than a structured form of employee empowerment.

A key feature of laissez-faire leadership is limited supervision, where leaders provide minimal oversight and allow employees to manage their own tasks independently (Amini et al., 2019). Although this approach may create opportunities for independence, it may also result in a lack of direction, reduced accountability, and role ambiguity if not properly managed. Similarly, responsibility within laissez-faire leadership tends to be loosely defined, with employees assuming responsibility for their performance in the absence of active leadership guidance. However, the lack of clear leadership direction may hinder coordination and alignment with organizational goals (Khan & Saleem, 2021).

Employee performance, on the other hand, refers to the extent to which employees effectively execute assigned tasks and contribute to organizational objectives (Silva & Mendis, 2017). It encompasses aspects such as productivity, work quality, innovation, adherence to organizational policies, and timeliness in task completion. Employee performance is also closely linked to job satisfaction, as employees who are satisfied with their roles are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of commitment and productivity, while dissatisfaction may lead to reduced performance outcomes (Chen, Zhu & Liu, 2021).

The implications of laissez-faire leadership on employee performance remain mixed and context-dependent. While the autonomy associated with this leadership style may encourage creativity and independent problem-solving among highly skilled employees, the absence of active leadership may also lead to confusion, lack of coordination, and diminished performance, particularly in environments where employees require guidance and supervision. Therefore, the effectiveness of laissez-faire leadership largely depends on factors such as employee competence, organizational structure, and the nature of tasks performed (Chen et al., 2021).

Effective leadership remains a critical determinant of institutional success and sustainability, as it shapes organizational direction and influences employee outcomes (Thanh & Quang, 2022). In faith-based institutions of higher learning, leadership practices are further related with organizational values, governance structures, and mission-driven objectives, which may affect how leadership styles impact employee performance. Despite the growing interest in leadership studies, there remains limited empirical evidence on how laissez-faire leadership, as a passive leadership approach, influences employee performance within faith-based academic institutions in Kenya.

Therefore, this study seeks to examine the relationship between laissez-faire leadership practices and employee performance in faith-based institutions of higher learning in the Rift Valley Region, Kenya. Specifically, the study focuses on how elements such as limited supervision, employee autonomy arising from leadership absence, and loosely structured responsibility affect employee performance within this institutional context.

1.1 Research Problem

Employee performance is a critical factor in determining the effectiveness of institutions of higher learning, as it directly influences service delivery, operational efficiency, and the achievement of institutional objectives. In faith-based institutions of higher learning in the Rift Valley Region of Kenya, there have been growing concerns regarding inconsistencies in employee performance. These include delays in task completion, reduced productivity, unclear role expectations, and variations in service quality among staff. The performance of the employees is one of the most important factors that determines the effectiveness of the organization in an institute of higher learning as it affects their service delivery, efficiency and achievement of the institute's goals. In spite of its importance, the research in HEIs has reported enduring problems such as low productivity, slow task completion rate, absenteeism, low staff commitment and service delivery inconsistencies, which affect the performance of the institution and ultimately the students' performance (Bass & Avolio, 2004; Langat et al., 2019; Northouse, 2025). The same issues have also been reported in Higher Education Institutions in Kenya, which have been linked to low levels of employee commitment and institutional performance due to poor leadership (Ngigi & Muathe, 2024). Such challenges undermine not only institutional effectiveness but also the ability of these institutions to fulfill their academic and value-based missions.

These performance-related concerns may be linked to the leadership approaches adopted within these institutions. In practice, some faith-based institutions exhibit leadership characteristics such as minimal supervision, limited managerial involvement, and a tendency to allow employees to operate independently without close guidance. While such an approach may be intended to promote independence and trust, it may also result in weak accountability structures, lack of coordination, and ambiguity in roles and responsibilities. These

characteristics are consistent with laissez-faire leadership, which is defined as a passive leadership style marked by avoidance of decision-making and limited engagement with employees.

Despite the potential influence of such leadership practices, there is limited empirical evidence examining how laissez-faire leadership affects employee performance within faith-based institutions of higher learning in the Rift Valley Region. Most existing studies in Kenya have focused on leadership styles such as transformational and transactional leadership within public universities, government institutions, and small and medium enterprises (Linge, Sikalieh & Asiimwe, 2020; Njiiri, 2024; Ogambi, 2024). These studies do not adequately address laissez-faire leadership as a distinct passive leadership construct, nor do they reflect the unique governance and value systems of faith-based institutions.

Furthermore, existing literature often presents conceptual ambiguity by associating elements such as autonomy and limited supervision with positive leadership practices, without clearly distinguishing them from laissez-faire leadership, which arises from the absence of active leadership rather than intentional empowerment. This has limited a clear understanding of how such leadership practices influence employee performance outcomes.

Therefore, there is a need to empirically investigate the influence of laissez-faire leadership practices specifically employee autonomy arising from minimal leadership involvement, limited supervision, and supervisory responsibility on employee performance in faith-based institutions of higher learning in the Rift Valley Region, Kenya. This study seeks to address this gap by providing context-specific evidence on the extent to which laissez-faire leadership contributes to the observed employee performance challenges in these institutions.

1.2 Objective of the Study

The broad objective of this study was to examine the relationship between laissez-faire leadership style on employee performance in faith-based institutions of higher learning in Rift Valley Region, Kenya.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Empirical Review

2.1.1 Relationship between Job Autonomy and Employee Performance

Muecke and Iseke (2019) conducted a meta-analysis exploring the relationship between job autonomy and job performance. They found that, overall, greater autonomy led to better job performance by enhancing motivation and reducing psychological strain across 319 studies involving 151,134 participants. The study identified three aspects of job autonomy active, method, and scheduling autonomy each with varying effects on performance. Active autonomy notably boosted motivation but scheduling autonomy had a dampening effect. The stress-reducing effects were strongest for active and method autonomy compared to scheduling autonomy. Additionally, initial evidence suggested that core self-evaluations played a mediating role in the effects of different job autonomy dimensions on motivation and strain.

Saragih (2019) examined the relationship between job autonomy and work outcomes, including job performance, job satisfaction, and job stress, with self-efficacy as a mediating factor. The analysis revealed a significant association between job autonomy and job satisfaction/performance, but not with job stress. Self-efficacy partially mediated the relationship between job autonomy and job satisfaction/performance but not for job stress.

Suteerawut et al., (2016) explored how job autonomy and positive mental capital influence organizational performance through intrinsic work motivation. They found that job autonomy, positive mental capital, and intrinsic work motivation were significantly related to job performance. Moreover, intrinsic work motivation fully mediated the relationship between job autonomy and job performance, and partially mediated the relationship between positive mental capital and job performance.

Zhou et al., (2019) investigated how job autonomy contributes to an employee's self-development. They discovered that job autonomy predicted self-development, with intrinsic motivation fully mediating this relationship. Team cohesion moderates the link between job autonomy and intrinsic motivation, further influencing the mediation effect.

Sisodia and Das (2018) revealed significant differences in job responsibilities between employees with high and low job autonomy, as well as between different hierarchical levels. Interaction effects were found between job autonomy and hierarchical level on employees' organizational commitment.

Naqvi et al., (2019) studied the impact of job autonomy on job satisfaction and organizational commitment in the fast-food sector of Pakistan, with organizational culture playing a moderating role. They found that increased job autonomy led to higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment, with organizational culture influencing this relationship. Gözükaraa and Çolakoğlu (2019) found that job autonomy positively influenced job satisfaction, but this relationship was negatively mediated by work-family conflict.

2.1.2 Influence of Job Supervision on Employee Performance

The influence of supervision on employee performance has been extensively studied in organizational psychology and management research. Several recent empirical studies provide insights into this relationship. By adopting supportive leadership styles, fostering quality relationships, providing training and development opportunities, creating psychologically safe environments, and offering constructive feedback, supervisors can positively impact employee performance and contribute to organizational success.

The quality of the relationship between supervisors and employees has a significant impact on performance. A study by Liu et al., (2023) highlighted the importance of supervisor support, feedback, and communication in fostering employee engagement and performance. Employees who perceive their supervisors as supportive and communicative tend to demonstrate higher levels of job satisfaction and performance.

Supervision plays a crucial role in creating a psychologically safe work environment where employees feel comfortable taking risks and expressing their ideas without fear of criticism or punishment. A study by Edmondson (2018) demonstrated that teams led by supervisors who promote psychological safety experience higher levels of creativity, collaboration, and ultimately, performance.

Effective supervision involves providing timely and constructive feedback to employees about their performance. Research by Budworth et al., (2019) emphasized the importance of feedback in improving employee performance, highlighting that feedback interventions led to significant performance improvements across various job roles and industries.

2.1.3 Relationship Between Supervisor Responsibility and Performance

Supervisor responsibility refers to the extent to which supervisors take accountability for guiding employees, clarifying expectations, addressing work-related problems, delegating tasks appropriately, and supporting employee performance. Empirical evidence suggests that employee responsibility plays a significant role in influencing various aspects of performance, including engagement, quality of work, initiative, teamwork, organizational citizenship behavior, and turnover intentions. Organizations can foster a culture of responsibility through effective leadership, clear communication of expectations, recognition of employee contributions, and opportunities for autonomy and decision-making.

Supervisors who feel a strong sense of responsibility towards their work are more likely to be engaged and motivated. Research by Bakker and Demerouti (2017) found that supervisors with a high sense of responsibility demonstrate higher levels of job engagement, which in turn positively influences their performance. Supervisors who take responsibility for their tasks tend to produce higher quality work. A study by Podsakoff et al., (2019) found a positive relationship between supervisor responsibility and job performance, particularly in terms of the quality of work produced.

Supervisors with a strong sense of responsibility are more likely to take the initiative and be proactive in their roles. This can lead to innovation, problem-solving, and overall organizational effectiveness. Research by Schmitt et al., (2017) supports this, showing that supervisors who take more responsibility are more likely to engage in proactive behaviors that benefit the organization.

Responsibility extends beyond individual tasks to encompass a sense of ownership towards team goals and outcomes. Supervisors who feel responsible for team success are more likely to collaborate effectively with colleagues and contribute to a positive team dynamic. A study by Gong and Grundy (2019) found that a sense of responsibility towards team goals positively predicts team performance.

Supervisors with a strong sense of responsibility are more likely to engage in organizational citizenship behavior, such as helping coworkers, volunteering for additional tasks, and representing the organization positively. Research by Bolino et al., (2024) found that supervisor responsibility is positively related to organizational citizenship behavior.

Supervisors who feel responsible for their work are more likely to remain committed to the organization and less likely to engage in behaviors such as absenteeism or turnover. A meta-analysis by Maertz Jr et al., (2017) found that perceptions of responsibility are negatively related to turnover intentions.

2.2 Theoretical Review

This study was guided by Laissez-faire Leadership Theory, Goal Setting Theory and Situational Contingency Theory.

2.2.1 Laissez-Faire Leadership Theory

Laissez-faire leadership, derived from the French term meaning “let it be,” refers to a leadership approach characterized by minimal direct supervision and a high degree of autonomy granted to subordinates (Nwokocha & Iheriohanma, 2012). Leaders employing this style take a passive role, avoiding both proactive and reactive engagement in organizational processes. It is often described as a “hands-off” leadership style, wherein individuals, such as educators, are allowed to complete tasks with minimal interference or directive oversight (Wong & Giessner, 2018). In educational contexts, principals who adopt laissez-faire leadership exert limited control over tutors, trusting them to fulfill their responsibilities independently (Diebig & Bormann, 2020).

Some scholars argue that laissez-faire leadership may resemble a form of non-leadership, as leaders exert minimal influence over their teams (Diebig & Bormann, 2020). This style is often associated with unclear organizational goals, reluctance to assist in decision-making, and excessive delegation of responsibilities (Ahsan & Khalid, 2023). Furthermore, laissez-faire leaders tend to rely on highly self-motivated individuals to complete tasks rather than actively guiding employee development. As a result, the absence of structured oversight can lead to inconsistent performance outcomes among employees (Ahsan & Khalid, 2023).

Laissez-faire leadership minimizes hierarchical distinctions between leaders and subordinates, based on the assumption that individuals are inherently responsible and require little supervision. Proponents of this style argue that it fosters a culture of trust, creativity, and innovation, allowing employees to perform without rigid constraints (Norris et al., 2021). However, critics suggest that excessive autonomy may lead to inefficiencies, lack of accountability, and diminished organizational cohesion. Leaders operating within this framework tend to set goals only, when necessary, provide minimal feedback, and avoid direct involvement in decision-making processes. Consequently, laissez-faire leadership is associated with a workplace culture characterized by self-management, limited communication, and passive governance.

According to laissez-faire leadership theory, workplace dynamics are impacted by a hands-off leadership style that is defined by little oversight and a high degree of employee autonomy. This theory is essential to this study because it helps determine whether giving employees more autonomy fosters motivation and creativity or results in inefficiency because of a lack of accountability. The study investigated whether laissez-faire leadership increases productivity or introduces uncertainty into organizational structures by looking at how employee performance is affected in faith-based higher education institutions in Kenya's Rift Valley. The results advances leadership theories by shedding light on how academic institutions strike a balance between autonomy and direction.

2.2.2 Goal Setting Theory

This theory suggests that setting goals can improve performance within organizations. Employees and leaders are guided by these goals toward specific performance targets. Organizational goals provide performance standards, which are evaluated to determine if organizational objectives are achieved. Leaders should establish challenging and specific goals to motivate and give purpose to employees. According to Locke and Latham (2019), leaders can use particularly challenging goals to spur better performance in various areas, including individual responsibilities, thereby enhancing overall organizational performance. It's important to set SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-based) goals, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound at the individual, team, and organizational levels. By employing goal-setting theories, leaders can boost their subordinates' commitment to performance through challenging SMART goals. These goals not only foster creativity and learning but also stimulate employees' innovative thinking. Therefore, the Goal Setting Theory emphasizes the importance of clear and specific goals for managers to achieve specific standards for their employees and the organization as a whole (Kruglanski et al., 2018). Goal Setting Theory was relevant to this study because laissez-faire leadership may weaken employee performance when supervisors fail to provide clear goals, performance standards, feedback, and direction.

2.2.3 Situational Contingency Theory

According to this theory, leadership effectiveness depends on how well a leader's personality aligns with the specific circumstances they face. Vidal et al., (2017) propose that the connection between leadership style and organizational outcomes is influenced by situational factors within the environment. Therefore, predicting organizational results solely based on leadership style is difficult unless the situational variables are well understood.

This leadership approach encompasses three models: Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership theory (1969), Fiedler's contingency theory (1967), and House's path-goal theory (1971). From these models, it can be inferred that there isn't a single leadership style that works in all situations. Success hinges on various factors, including the leader's preferred style, the capabilities and behaviors of followers, and the specifics of the situation. Effective leadership, in light of situational factors, requires the adaptation of one's leadership style. Additionally, control in this context depends on three factors: the leader's position, power or authority, the structure of the task, and the relationship between followers and their leader (Abba et al., 2018). Situational Contingency Theory supports this study by suggesting that laissez-faire leadership may produce different outcomes depending on employee competence, institutional structure, task clarity, and the level of supervisory support available.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed descriptive cross-sectional research design, collecting data at a specific moment (Clark & Watson, 2019). Additionally, the study utilized correlation design to assess the connection between laissez-faire leadership style and employee performance. The population of this study was employees of the faith-based institutions of higher learning in Rift Valley counties.

3.2 Sample and Sampling Techniques

A multistage sampling method was used in this study. In the first stage, purposive sampling method was used to select the counties which had faith-based institutions of higher learning. The researcher sampled the 5 counties from the 14 counties. The target population consisted of 532 employees from the five faith-based institutions selected. The second stage involved having the selected faith-based institutions of higher learning in the sampled counties form the sampling frame. Subsequently, respondents were sampled from participating institutions using Slovin's formula.

3.3 Data Collection Instrument

The study gathered primary data through self-administered questionnaires, comprising only closed-ended questions. Respondents responded to a series of questions, which were tailored to address specific research objectives. The questionnaire used a four-point Likert scale where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, and 4 = Strongly Agree. For employee performance, 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Often, and 4 = Always (Clark & Watson, 2019). Questions were formulated based on both dependent and independent variables of the study, ensuring coverage of all research inquiries.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Initially, the researcher sought permission from both NACOSTI and the research committee at the University of Eastern Africa, Baraton. Subsequently, approval was sought from all the relevant institutions. Once these permissions and approvals were obtained, the researcher personally distributed the questionnaires to the respondents. By signing the questionnaires, respondents gave consent to participating in the study. Data was collected firsthand by providing the questionnaires to the respondents, allowing them to fill in their responses, and then retrieving the questionnaires later. To ensure convenience, respondents received questionnaires at their respective workstations.

3.4 Data Analysis

The information collected was put into SPSS for statistical examination. The reliability was assessed through Cronbach's alpha. Both descriptive and inferential statistical methods were employed during analysis, encompassing measures like mean and standard deviation for descriptive statistics. Pearson correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship between laissez-faire leadership dimensions and employee performance. Results were showcased via frequency distribution tables and pie charts, forming the foundation for interpretation, discussion, conclusion, and recommendations derived from the research.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The researcher ensured confidentiality throughout the research process. Additionally, the researcher emphasized voluntary participation and requested their involvement by providing relevant information. Following guidelines from Kaewkungwal and Adams (2019), participants received a consent form detailing the study's purpose. Before distributing research instruments, the study underwent review by the University of Eastern Africa-Baraton's ethical committees and NACOSTI. Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the Graduate School through a formal letter.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Relationship Between Laissez-Faire Practices and Employee Performance

4.1.1 Correlation Analysis

To examine the significant relationship between laissez-faire practices and employee performance, the researcher used Pearson correlation. In this study, correlation was used to explain the relationship. This was a statistical test to test the hypothesis by determining the degree of the relationship. The range of the correlation was determined from -1 to +1. Where a negative value of correlation denotes a negative correlation while a positive value of correlation denotes a positive correlation. The test also determined the strength of correlation where $r < 0.3$ = weak, $0.3 \leq r < 0.5$ = moderate and $r \geq 0.5$ = strong. Significant correlation was determined by a p value less than 0.05. A p value greater than 0.05 means that the correlation is not significant.

Table 1: Relationship between Laissez-faire Practices and Employee Performance

Correlations						
		Employee Autonomy	Limited Supervision	Supervisor's Responsibility	Quality of Work	Time Management
Employee Autonomy	Pearson Correlation	1	.597**	.499**	.154	.146
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.072	.092
	N	137	135	137	137	135
Limited Supervision	Pearson Correlation	.597**	1	.626**	.220**	.254**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.010	.003
	N	135	136	136	136	134
Supervisor's Responsibility	Pearson Correlation	.499**	.626**	1	.256**	.401**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.002	.000
	N	137	136	138	138	136
Quality of Work	Pearson Correlation	.154	.220**	.256**	1	.536**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.072	.010	.002		.000
	N	137	136	138	138	136
Time Management	Pearson Correlation	.146	.254**	.401**	.536**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.092	.003	.000	.000	
	N	135	134	136	136	136

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From Table 1 above, respondents indicated that their work is often free from errors, they often meet quality standards required for their jobs, they often pay close attention to detail in their work, they often complete tasks fully and leave no loose ends and their work often contributes positively to the institution's goals with means ranging from 3.07 to 3.64 and standard deviations ranging from 0.538 to 0.625.

From table 1 above, limited supervision has a positive, significant but weak correlation with quality of work and time management (Pearson coefficients of 0.220 and 0.254), and (*P* value of 0.010 and 0.003). Supervisor's responsibility has a positive, significant but weak correlation with quality of work (Pearson coefficients of 0.256 and *P* value of 0.002) and positive, significant and moderate correlation with time management (Pearson coefficients of 0.401 and *P* value of 0.000). However, there is no significant relationship between employee autonomy and employee performance in terms of quality of work and time management (Pearson coefficients of 0.154, 0.146 and *P* values of 0.072 and 0.092).

The findings of this study indicate that the relationships between laissez-faire leadership practices and employee performance are generally weak, with limited practical significance, despite some being statistically significant. This suggests that while certain leadership practices may have measurable associations with performance, they explain only a small proportion of variation in employee outcomes. The Pearson correlation analysis showed that the correlation of dimensions of laissez-faire leadership with employee performance was mostly low. Limited supervision was statistically significantly positively related to quality of work ($r = .220$; $p = .010$) and time management ($r = .254$; $p = .003$). While these relationships were significant, the correlation coefficients suggest weak associations, implying that there is only a somewhat subtle relationship between limited supervision and employee performance.

Likewise, supervisor responsibility was positively associated with quality of work, statistically ($r = .256$, $p = .002$), but was again a weak correlation. When it came to time management, however, the correlation between supervisor responsibility and time management was moderate ($r = .401$, $p < .001$), meaning that time management was more closely related to increased responsibility than it was to quality of work. Even this association, however, was moderate and not strong, suggesting that supervisor's responsibility is not fully responsible for the differences in employee performance.

There was no significant relationship between employee autonomy and quality of work ($r = .154$, $p = .072$), or time management ($r = .146$, $p = .092$). The result indicates that autonomy that comes from laissez-faire leadership style (low involvement of leaders) is not linked to better employee performance in the sampled faith-based institutions of higher education.

In general, the current results suggest that some aspects of laissez-faire leadership are statistically correlated with employees' performance, but the correlations tend to be small and thus are not practically significant. This

indicates that only a minor portion of the variation in employee performance can be attributed to the practice of laissez-faire leadership, and that other factors in the organisation and individuals are likely to be more significant in explaining employees' quality of work and time management.

These findings support the argument that laissez-faire leadership, as a passive leadership style, does not inherently enhance employee performance. While it may provide flexibility and independence, its effectiveness is highly dependent on contextual factors such as employee competence, organizational structure, and the presence of minimal supervisory support. Without these conditions, laissez-faire leadership may result in weak or negligible performance improvements. Overall, the study demonstrates that laissez-faire leadership practices have limited explanatory power in predicting employee performance. The weak correlations observed suggest that relying on this leadership style alone is unlikely to produce significant improvements in performance within faith-based institutions of higher learning.

These findings of this study contradict the results of Muecke and Iseke (2019) who, in their meta-analysis, found that job autonomy in general does have a positive impact on employee performance. The results indicate that workers' performance improves when they are given autonomy and freedom to undertake their assigned responsibilities in a preferred manner. But the difference could be attributable to the difference between job autonomy and laissez-faire leadership. Job autonomy is the granting of authority and resources to employees to make decisions within a defined organizational structure, while autonomy under a laissez faire leadership might mean that there is less managerial guidance, monitoring and support. Moreover, the independence that is afforded by a laissez-faire leader might not necessarily be the kind that would produce better performance.

Ngigi and Muathe (2024) focused on leadership styles and employee performance of non-academic staff of selected public universities in Kenya. Their work supplies appropriate contextual data that supports the significance of leadership in comprehending employee productivity in university settings. Their study, however, does not isolate the relation between limited supervision and performance as was done in the present study and therefore their results cannot be directly related to the findings of the present study.

The finding of this study is also significant for Ngigi (2025), who found that church involvement in the governance of private universities and support in form of material resources was significant in Kenyan private universities. Supervisory responsibility in faith-based institutions can then be viewed in a broader institutional context that also includes accountability, stewardship and institutional goals. While Ngigi's study did not focus specifically on the relationship between the supervisor responsibility and individual employee performance, the institutional setting offers some support for understanding the significance of institutional oversight.

4.1.2 Regression Analysis

Following the correlation analysis, which identified significant relationships between limited supervision with quality of work and time management, supervisor's responsibility with quality of work and time management and no significant relationship between employee autonomy and employee performance in terms of quality of work and time management. The researcher aimed to determine the extent of this association. To achieve this, linear regression was employed to further analyze and explain the nature and strength of the relationship.

4.1.2.1 Model Summary

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.367[a]	.135	.114	2.21397

a. Predictors: (Constant), Supervisor Responsibility, Employee Autonomy, Limited Supervision

Table 2 presents the R and R^2 values. The R value, which represents the simple correlation, is 0.367, indicating a moderate relationship between supervisor responsibility, employee autonomy, limited supervision and employee performance. The R^2 value reflects the proportion of variation in the dependent variable employee performance that can be attributed to the independent variables, supervisor responsibility, employee autonomy and limited supervision. In this study, 13.5% of the total variation is explained, highlighting a moderate degree of influence.

4.1.2.2 ANOVA

Table 3: ANOVA

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	98.276	3	32.759	6.683	.000[b]
	Residual	632.312	129	4.902		
	Total	730.588	132			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Supervisor Responsibility, Employee Autonomy, Limited Supervision

As illustrated in Table 3 above, presents the ANOVA results, which assess the overall significance of the regression model and its ability to fit the data effectively. The findings indicate that the regression model is statistically significant, demonstrating strong predictive capability for the dependent variable ($p < 0.000$). Since this p-value is below the 0.05 threshold, it confirms that the regression model meaningfully predicts employee performance.

4.1.2.3 Coefficients

Table 4: Coefficients

Coefficients[a]						
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	15.771	1.520		10.372	.000
	Employee Autonomy	-.003	.064	-.005	-.051	.959
	Limited Supervision	.036	.073	.057	.493	.623
	Supervisor Responsibility	.220	.071	.332	3.112	.002

a. Dependent Variable: Performance

In Table 4 above the explanation of employee performance from employee autonomy, limited supervision and supervisor responsibility as well as determining whether they contribute statistically and significantly to the model.

$Y=\beta_0+\beta_1 + \beta_2+ \beta_3+\epsilon$

Employee Performance = 15.771 (Constant)+0.220 (supervisor responsibility). The constant of 15.771 represents the expected level of employee performance when employee autonomy, limited supervision and supervisor responsibility are held at zero. The result suggests that holding employee autonomy and limited supervision constant, the more responsible a supervisor, the higher the employee's performance, with each unit of increase in supervisor responsibility representing a 0.220-unit increase in employee performance. The p-value (0.002) is less than the 0.05 level of significance and therefore supervisor responsibility is a statistically significant contributor to employee performance. The standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.332$) also showed that supervisor responsibility was the strongest predictor of the three independent variables that were put in the model. The results of the regression indicate that the three variables taken together to form a significant regression model, but that supervisor responsibility is the only individual predictor that is significant in explaining employee performance. The results thus indicate that, with the other predictors held constant, higher levels of supervisor responsibility are related to higher levels of employee performance, while employee autonomy and lower levels of supervisor responsibility are not associated with additional significant contributions to employee performance.

The findings of this study offer a valuable contrast to the generally positive relationship between job autonomy and employee performance that was reported in a meta-analysis by Muecke and Iseke (2019). While under certain organizational conditions, autonomy can lead to better performance, the present regression results indicate that autonomy was not as such a predictor of employee performance when limited supervision and supervisor responsibility were controlled for. This distinction implies that autonomous leadership attributes may not follow into autonomous aspects of the job resulting from a relatively passive leadership style.

This result differs from Muecke and Iseke (2019), who found mostly positive performance results to be correlated with job autonomy. Their findings are, however, concerning job autonomy as a work characteristic, not the passive role that supervisors have that goes with laissez faire leadership. An important difference is that whilst employees can have some flexibility in their work, they also need to know what to expect, feedback and support from their managers.

The results can be connected with the suggestion by Skogstad et al., (2007), that when leaders do not give the needed guidance and intervention, the passive leadership style might lead to negative organizational outcomes. Their research indicates that the lack of excessive supervision does not mean the lack of managerial responsibility. A lack of supervision could have been beneficial at the correlation level in the present study, but not at an independent level.

The finding also connects to Ngigi (2025), who argues that institutional governance involvement and organizational support are crucial to the development of church sponsorship and organizational culture in private universities in Kenya. Supervisory responsibility can be of special importance in a Faith-based institution, where an employee's independence might be challenged by the standards and expectations of the institution in which he works, and the standards and expectations of those to whom he is accountable.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the findings from the data analyzed, the study was in a position to conclude that:

Based on respondents' self-reported ratings, employees of the faith-based institutions of higher learning in Rift Valley Region, Kenya perceived themselves as demonstrating good quality of work and strong time management practices.

The results indicate that employee autonomy was commonly practiced, but it did not have a statistically significant relationship with employee performance in the faith-based institutions of higher learning in Rift Valley Region, Kenya.

Respondents generally agreed that limited supervision was practiced in the faith-based institutions of higher learning in Rift Valley Region, Kenya.

Respondents generally agreed that supervisors practiced responsibility in their roles in the faith-based institutions of higher learning in Rift Valley Region, Kenya.

Despite being widely practiced, employee autonomy did not demonstrate a statistically significant relationship with employee performance in this study context.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends that

1. The employees of faith-based institutions of higher learning in Rift Valley should undergo training to enhance their productivity and task management skills, ensuring consistent and effective performance.
2. Faith-based institutions of higher learning in Rift Valley should establish transparent policies and accountability frameworks to support employees in maintaining autonomy while aligning with institutional objectives. Since employee autonomy was practiced but did not significantly relate to performance, institutions should not rely on autonomy alone. Clear goals, feedback mechanisms, accountability structures, and adequate resources should support autonomy.
3. A balanced supervision strategy should be implemented to ensure accountability while granting employees the flexibility to work independently in the faith-based institutions of higher learning in Rift Valley.
4. Institutions should strengthen supervisor responsibility by introducing structured performance feedback, mentorship, recognition systems, and professional development programmes.
5. Faith-based institutions of higher learning in Rift Valley should introduce leadership development and mentorship initiatives to strengthen supervisory skills and foster employee involvement.
6. Faith-based institutions of higher learning in Rift Valley should identify and implement various motivation strategies, including rewards and professional development opportunities, to reinforce the link between supervision and employee performance.
7. Further research is recommended to explore the contextual factors that may moderate the relationship between employee autonomy and performance, particularly focusing on the organizational culture and structure of faith-based institutions of higher learning in Kenya.

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