

INFLUENCE OF ADAPTIVE LEADERS' CONTEXTUAL INTELLIGENCE ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN STAR RATED HOTELS IN MOMBASA COUNTY, KENYA

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# INFLUENCE OF ADAPTIVE LEADERS' CONTEXTUAL INTELLIGENCE ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN STAR RATED HOTELS IN MOMBASA COUNTY, KENYA

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Organisations globally, and specifically in the Kenyan context, can improve their performance by understanding how to capture this lost discretionary effort of their employees. The present study sought to establish the impact of adaptive leaders' contextual intelligence and employee performance in star rated hotels in Mombasa County, Kenya. The study was guided by the Adaptive leadership theory. The study was conducted using descriptive cross-sectional survey design and targeted 18 classified hotels in Mombasa County from which the unit of observation comprised the management and employees in each classified hotel all who numbered 4630. A sample size of 94 respondents was drawn using stratified random sampling method. Questionnaires were used to collect data after pilot testing them in Kilifi County. The data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The findings showed that adaptive leaders' contextual intelligence had a discernible impact on the overall performance of the workforce. As a result of the findings of the research, starrated hotels in Mombasa should put adaptive leaders' contextual intelligence into practice in order to improve the performance of their staff. It was hoped that the findings of the study would be beneficial to all stakeholders in the hotel industry. This may lead to the development of better practices to improve the leadership and management efficiency in the sector.

Key Words: Adaptive Leadership, Contextual Intelligence

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#### INTRODUCTION

In the current challenging global financial landscape, especially within the Kenyan milieu, organizations stand to gain significantly from unlocking the untapped discretionary effort of their workforce. Research has established that elevated employee engagement correlates with superior shareholder heightened profitability, diminished returns, attrition rates, and elevated customer satisfaction (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2012; Kumar & Pansari, 2015; Saks & Gruman, 2011). Particularly in an era characterized by sluggish economic growth (World Economic Forum, 2015), fostering an engaged workforce can tangibly reduce operational costs by minimizing wastage (Rees, Alfes, & Gatenby, 2013). Additional merits of employee engagement encompass amplified organizational citizenship behavior, escalated organizational commitment, augmented job satisfaction, and subsequently, reduced turnover intentions (Saks, 2006). Such benefits are intrinsically tied to the prevailing leadership styles within the organization.

The influence of leadership styles on employee performance has been the subject of extensive international research. For instance, Sarti and Delle Pandette (2014) emphasized the significance of in achieving elevated leadership individual performance within the Italian context, particularly highlighting the role of instrumental leadership, absorption, and Vigor. On the other hand, a German leadership model was characterized by attributes such as high-performance orientation, limited compassion, low self-protection, reduced team orientation, heightened autonomy, and increased participation (Brodbeck, Frese & Javidan, 2020). It is notable, however, that cross-cultural variances in leadership styles exist, especially in the hospitality sector. According to an intercultural analysis by Yilmaz and Konaklioglu (2022), transactional leadership was predominant among managers in Italian hospitality firms, while their Turkish counterparts predominantly favoured These transformational leadership. studies, however, failed to explore the domain of adaptive

leadership and its potential impacts on employee performance.

In various international contexts, the role of leadership styles in shaping employee performance has been substantiated through empirical research. For example, in Pakistan, a study by Fiaz et al. (2017) revealed that task-oriented leadership behavior was instrumental in enhancing organizational performance. Contrarily, research in Malaysia indicated that only supportive and transformational leadership behaviors significantly impacted employee performance positively, while other styles like servant, participative, and transactional leadership showed no notable influence (Lor & Hassan, Z., 2017).

Leadership in Kenya is complex as it is characterized by a mixture of authoritarian and traditional leadership approaches (Wang & Walumbwa, 2017), bureaucratic hierarchies and modern supervision which inhibit growth approaches competitiveness. In fact, Kenya's productivity and managerial competency is currently ranked 106th out of 144 countries (World Competitiveness Report, 2012). The rank poorly positions organizations in Kenya and gives an indication that Kenyan companies are over-managed, poorly managed and less-led as observed by Muchiri (2011) that leaders in Sub-Saharan countries practice paternalistic and patrimonial leadership behaviours. Moreover, Walumbwa (2010) found out that authentic leadership and servant leadership can improve leadership effectiveness in Kenya. However, with the changing dynamics and demographics in the workplace as well as changing technologies, customers, competitive environment, there is need for adaptive leadership in the business workplace in Kenya.

Kenya's hotel industry is arguably one of the most competitive in the African continent. Over the years the hotel industry in the country has undergone great transition and evolving considerably to impress generation after generation of visitors with different expectations by adjusting their levels of standards of service, luxurious style, hospitality and comfort. This

has resulted therefore to the present close relationship of hotel and tourism industries. Consequently, the government has positioned tourism and by extension the hotel business as one of the leading sectors that will enable the achievement of the Vision 2030 Goals. Kenya hopes to be among the top ten long-haul tourist destinations in the world offering a high-end, diverse and distinctive visitor experience that few of her competitors can offer. Twenty percent of all hotels in Kenya are found in the Coastal region accounting for 39% of total beds due to the traditional beach product, which led to the rapid development of tourism infrastructure and beach resorts in the late 70's and early 80's. On the coast, the hotels offer a variety of accommodation fronting the white sandy beaches. For business tourists, the city hotels are classic are numerous offering good meeting facilities.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

In the last three years, the hotel industry in Kenya like in other contexts globally has been exposed to arguably the most significant crisis in their existence, the emergence of Covid-19. However, mass vaccinations now in place and available, the hotels as the entire tourism and travel industry are allowed to reopen. However, their reopening performance is currently affected by a slow sector recovery rate owing to travel restrictions in some countries, slow containment of the virus, low traveller confidence and a poor economic environment. For the hotels to emerge competitively out of the crises, they will have to use new approaches to their organizational operations particularly employee performance. The latest Gallup global survey of employee performance found that only 13% of employees are actively engaged and that they are outnumbered by more than two to one by actively disengaged employees. Further, 22% of employees have called in sick rather than face a performance review, 35% have complained to their peers, and a shocking 15% have even cried. In 25% of cases, employees guit their job due to a lack of acknowledgment. The report further showed that only 32.5% of employees in the

U.S. are actively engaged in their jobs and 86% of employees and executives indicated that poor collaboration and inefficient communication are the main reasons for workplace failures.

The continuous deepening and adjustment of social structure has made the organizational environment of enterprises increasingly complicated leading to poorly engaged employees. Further, the diversity of employees in enterprises is becoming increasingly apparent. Superficial characteristics in the past such as ethnicity, gender, age, and place of origin are no longer sufficient to comprehensively systematically display the diversity characteristics. On this premise, adaptive leadership, as one of the new leadership styles in such a diverse environment, is increasingly getting attention from various industries. It can be said that the primary characteristics of modern organizations have shown diversity and dynamics. In order to actively respond to organizational changes in the new environment, the concept and connotation of adaptive leadership has emerged. Adaptive leadership could be instrumental in improving employee performance which is critical to the performance of the industry. Adaptive leadership meets the requirements of a new leadership style for employees in this specific era, and can better integrate people and affairs into leadership style, so it can also play a new role in the current management context.

However, there is currently no extant literature on the influence of adaptive leadership and employee performance or relationship between the two variables in the hotel industry in Kenya. For instance, Mapelu and Jumah (2013) examined the effect of training and development on employee turnover in selected medium sized hotels in Kisumu City, Kenya. Cheruiyot and Maru (2012) also examined employee social responsibility practices and outcomes in Kenya's tourist hotels. However, the studies did not examine employee performance in the hotel industries. Also, other studies such as Manzoor et al., (2019) examined sustainable HRM practices on job performance in the hotel industry while an earlier study by Ndede (2014) studied the effects of reward

management on employee performance in hotels in North coast, Kenya. Dwesini (2019) investigated the causes and prevention of high employee turnover within the hospitality industry. However, the studies did not link adaptive leaders' contextual intelligence and employee performance in hotel firms in Kenya. Therefore, this study examined the impact of adaptive leaders' contextual intelligence and employee performance in star rated hotels in Mombasa County, Kenya.

## **Objectives of the Study**

The objective of this study was to establish the influence of Adaptive Leaders' Contextual Intelligence on employee performance in star rated hotels in Mombasa County, Kenya. The study tested the following research hypothesis;

■ **H**<sub>0</sub>: Adaptive Leaders' Contextual Intelligence does not significantly influence employee performance in star rated hotels in Mombasa County, Kenya.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Theoretical Review**

### **Adaptive Leadership Theory**

Adaptive leadership theory was introduced by leadership experts, Harvard professors, and authors Marty Linsky and Ronald Heifetz. Marty Linsky and Heifetz's extensive research concluded that businesses are constantly changing or developing and must be navigated accordingly (Heifetz et al., 2009). Leaders who apply adaptive leadership theory go beyond simply addressing challenges and finding ways to solve them. They also anticipate challenges and are able to identify their root causes. Furthermore, they are skilled at recognizing what risks are worth taking and what to avoid wasting the organization's time on. This allows them to have the skills they need to adapt to ensure their organization has the best leadership possible. The adaptive leadership framework is built off of what Linksy and Heifetz created (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). The Adaptive theory provided the overaching leadership framework through which the constructs of adaptive leadership was examined in the present study.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework showing the relationships between the independent variable and dependent variable was as shown in Figure 1.



### **Independent Variables**

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

#### **Review of Study Variables**

## **Adaptive Leaders' Contextual Intelligence**

Context is the background in which an event takes place. Contexts come in various forms and involve any set of circumstances surrounding an event. The science of hermeneutics teaches us that knowing the specific context of an event is imperative to a correct interpretation. Contextual Intelligence, therefore, is

a construct that involves the ability to recognize and diagnose the plethora of contextual factors inherent in an event or circumstance, then intentionally and intuitively adjust behavior in order to exert influence in that context (Marishane, 2020). The conceptual basis of contextual intelligence involves convergence of three abilities. Contextual intelligence necessarily requires that 1) an intuitive grasp of relevant past

**Dependent Variables** 

events, 2) acute awareness of present contextual variables, and 3) awareness of the preferred future, interact so that the practitioner can exert influence and make appropriate decisions (Khanna, 2015).

Amid globalization, advancing technology, the rising awareness of global citizenship, and the increasing number of stakeholders it is not surprising to find a large number of contextual variables inherent in every situation. These contextual variables are multifaceted and fluid. Adapting as new conditions emerge is an important ability for contemporary leaders (Huston, 2006). Leadership needs to be able to remain effective amid changing contexts and be able to transition successfully into different contexts. The contextual ecosystem surrounding an individual is dynamic and fragile and crosses a diversity of industries and settings (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Moore, 1993). In light of these turbulent surroundings, today's leaders need to seize all their opportunities to be creative and original (Gabriel, 2002).

Today's organizational context has an increasing diversity of stakeholders compounded by greater and greater divergence between stakeholder values. These and other factors are forcing the rapid evolution and enhancement of skills of workers. Today's leaders, managers, and employees must be able to foresee and diagnose any number of changing contexts quickly; then seamlessly adapt to that new context or risk becoming obsolete and irrelevant (Kutz, & Kutz, 2017). Diagnosing contexts successfully requires intentional leadership and a paradoxical devotion to having a global perspective in the midst of local circumstances. Commitment to discerning the variables inherent in each new context can be likened to the commitment Kofman and Senge (1993) called for of the learning organization. Much like a learning organization, an individual's commitment to accurately discerning contexts requires a dramatic shift in current ways of thinking, classifying, and assimilating data and information. Diagnosing contexts is, however, different from the learning organization in that the

ability to diagnose context is an individual's skill and is not directly an organizational phenomenon.

#### **Empirical Review**

# Adaptive Leaders' Contextual Intelligence and employee performance

Contextual intelligence is an emergent paradigm that transcends traditional measures of intelligence such as IQ and test performance, focusing instead on an individual or organization's ability to accurately interpret and adapt to their specific environment. Khanna (2014) asserts that contextual intelligence is vital for organizational success as it encapsulates an entity's comprehension of its setting and capacity to operationalize learned insights into real-world scenarios.

Kutz (2011) conducted a systematic literature review examining the role of contextual intelligence in overcoming performance barriers during periods of change. The study emphasized that leadership effectiveness is increasingly context-dependent, necessitating a novel skillset designed for adaptability across varied contexts. The study also noted that while intuition is becoming a valuable asset, it requires a foundation of experience to be reliable.

Gbarale and Kpakol (2021) focused on the Nigerian operational environment, conducting a theoretical review framed by the reciprocal determinism theory. The study emphasized the need for contextual intelligence in crafting and implementing policies that are both meaningful and responsive, particularly in the face of crises like the Ebola and COVID-19 pandemics.

Similarly, Bushe (2019) conducted an empirical review to explore the factors contributing to the high failure rates of Small to Micro and Medium Enterprises (SMMEs) in South Africa. The study identified three primary causes of failure: entrepreneurial incapacity, unfavorable environmental conditions, and organizational incompetence. The study concluded organizational failure often stems from an inability to adapt to the requirements of its specific context.

Zamora and Losad (2014) explored the role of contextual intelligence in shaping public perceptions of political leadership, using data from three regional elections featuring Ramón Luis Valcárcel, the long-serving president of Spain's Murcia region. The findings indicated that Valcárcel's effectiveness and public perception were closely tied to his ability to strategically align himself with context-specific issues and attributes.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

Research Design: Descriptive research design was used in this study. This study was cross-sectional in nature. The research also adopted a survey method. Descriptive purpose focuses on finding key phenomena in order to identify patterns and trends in a situation with the aim to draw conclusions from the data that are described (Yin 2003). The study used a descriptive cross sectional survey research design. It was used to explore the impact of adaptive leadership and employee performance in star rated hotels in Mombasa County, Kenya and establish the relationships between variables, and allow for generalizations across populations. Hence, the design is appropriate to the study because the research seeks to establish a cause-effect relationship between the study variables.

**Population:** According to data from the Tourism Regulatory Authority (TRA) (2017), there are 18 star rated hotels located in Mombasa County and range from two star hotels to five star hotels making it the county with the highest number of classified hotels in the region. The unit of observation was the management and employees in each classified hotel in Mombasa County all who number 1638. These were the respondents of the study.

**Sampling Frame:** According to Fish (1995), a sampling frame is a list of all elements in a population. In this study there is a list of all employees in the 18 Star rated hotels in Mombasa County.

Sample and Sampling Technique: Since the target population was small and accessible, that was, 18 Star rated hotels, the study adopted the census approach, therefore, there was no need for sampling of the hotels. The management members were, however, purposively sampled while the employees were selected through random sampling.

To obtain the required sample size of 94 respondents from these target population, the study adopted the formula by Nassiuma (2000).

Simple random sampling was used in this study to determine the sample sizes according to the strata. A random sample was a useful blend of randomization and categorization, which enables both a quantitative and qualitative process of research to be undertaken (Cohen & Manion, 2003). The advantage in simple random sampling is that it ensures inclusion of all the members of the population since the population under study is homogenous. This otherwise, would be omitted entirely by other sampling methods because of their small numbers in the population. After obtaining the required sample size, the sampling frame of the study was used to stratify the respondents into 2 categories; the management and staffs. Neyman allocation formula was used to allocate the sample size into their respective strata. The purpose of the method was to maximize survey precision, given a fixed sample size. With Neyman allocation, the "best" sample size for stratum h would be:

Research Instruments: Primary data was used in this study. The study used structured questionnaire for data collection developed by the researcher. The questionnaires were self-administered to the respondents, that is, they were given to the respondents to go and fill them in their own time so as to give them enough time to complete the copies of the questionnaire before returning them for analysis. The questionnaire comprised of structured questions. This type of questionnaire is ideally used with the Likert scale.

Data Processing and Analysis: The study employed the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) software, version 24 for Windows, to carry out preliminary data analysis. Basic descriptive statistics, including the mean, standard deviation, and variance, were utilized to provide an initial overview of general trends within the dataset.

## **Contextual Intelligence**

The objective of the study was to establish the effects of organization Adaptive Leaders' Contextual Intelligence on employee performance in star rated hotels in Mombasa. In this light, the study required the respondents to reply to a series of statements in order to determine how organization related factors affecting employee performance in star rated hotels. This was on a scale of 1 to 5 where: Where 1=strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree as shown in Table 1.

#### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

**Table 1: Contextual Intelligence** 

Descriptive Statistics						
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev.		
Our leaders at work are able to process past relevant events	4.00	5.00	4.80	.40		
Past relevant events affecting our organization are always used by leaders to inform strategic decision making	4.00	5.00	4.78	.41		
The hotel leaders emphasize situational awareness to enable the processing of current contextual events	4.00	5.00	4.80	.40		
Current contextual events guide the hotel management in adjusting their strategies	4.00	5.00	4.80	.40		
We have a desired future state already in our strategic plan	4.00	5.00	4.78	.41		
The leadership communicates the desired future state of the hotel to employees and departments for alignment N=90	4.00	5.00	4.80	.40		

Table 1 showed a summary of responses to items on contextual intelligence in the form of mean and standard deviations. Of the sampled participants, majority of the respondents agreed (M=4.80) with the statement that the leaders at work are able to process past relevant events. The respondents also agreed (M=4.78) that past relevant events affecting our organization are always used by leaders to inform strategic decision making. The respondents agreed that the hotel leaders emphasize situational

awareness to enable the processing of current contextual events (M=4.80). The respondents further agreed that the current contextual events guide the hotel management in adjusting their strategies (M=4.80). They went on to say that they have a desired future state already in our strategic plan (M=4.78). Finally the respondents agreed (M=4.80) that the leadership communicates the desired future state of the hotel to employees and departments for alignment.

# **Employee performance in Hotel Firms in Mombasa County**

Employee performance in Hotel Firms in Mombasa County was assessed using a Likert scale where SA = 5 for strongly agreed, A = 4 agreed, N = 3 neutral, D = 2 disagreed and SD = 1 strongly disagreed.

Table 2: Employee performance in Hotel Firms in Mombasa County

Descriptive Statistics						
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev.		
Our employee performance has been improving as a result of restructuring	4.00	5.00	4.80	.40		
We have been able to retain most of our employees	4.00	5.00	4.77	.42		
There is increased employee involvement in our hotel	4.00	5.00	4.80	.40		
Most of our employees are satisfied with their jobs	4.00	5.00	4.80	.40		
Employees show considerable enthusiasm in their work	4.00	5.00	4.78	.42		
Employees have improved in customer handling	4.00	5.00	4.80	.40		
The employees in our hotel demonstrate high levels of organizational citizenship	4.00	5.00	4.80	.40		
N=90						

According to the findings in Table 2, interviewees believed that various aspects of adaptive leadership have an impact on employee performance. Of the sampled participants, majority of the respondents agreed (M=4.80) with the statement that our employee performance has been improving as a result of restructuring. The respondents also agreed (M=4.77) that we have been able to retain most of our employees. The respondents agreed that there is increased employee involvement in our hotel (M=4.80). The respondents further agreed with the statement that most of our employees are satisfied with their jobs (M=4.80). They went on to say that employees show considerable enthusiasm in their work (M=4.78). The respondents further agreed that employees have improved in customer handling (M=4.80). Finally the respondents agreed (M=4.80) that the employees in our hotel demonstrate high levels of organizational citizenship.

The hypothesis was tested and given as follows;

■ H<sub>0</sub>: Adaptive Leaders' Contextual Intelligence does not significantly influence employee performance in star rated hotels in Mombasa County, Kenya. The null hypothesis was rejected, (P<0.05). The research findings indicated that there was significant effect of Adaptive Leaders'

Contextual Intelligence on employee performance at Star rated hotels in Mombasa.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

According to the findings of the study, the respondents' consensus was that the influence of contextual intelligence on employee performance was attributable to a number of different factors. The findings of the research demonstrate that leaders in the workplace are able to process important events from the past. The respondents were also in agreement that historical information regarding key events that had an impact on the star ratings of hotels is always used by leaders to inform strategic decision making. According to the respondents, the leaders of the hotel stress the importance of situational awareness in order to facilitate the processing of ongoing contextual activities. As a consequence of this, the current contextual events direct the hotel management in adapting their strategies, and the leadership ensures that employees and departments are aligned with the desired future state of the hotel through communication regarding the desired future state. These findings were in agreement with the findings that were presented by Marishane (2020) and Khanna (2015), who suggested that contextual intelligence, makes use of relevant past events to display contextual variables and develop knowledge of the chosen future. As a result, the management of the hotel ought to place a greater emphasis on cultivating contextual intelligence among its managers.

In addition, the findings of the study indicated that there are a number of specific components of relationship management that adaptive leaders should focus on. The respondents highlighted the importance of effective relationship management as fundamental to the success of star-rated hotels. Communicating with confidence is an essential component of effective relationship management. It is the capacity to communicate and express one's ideas, emotions, and perspectives. According to Aggarwal, Chand, Jhamb, and Mitta (2020), effective communication and coordination skills are necessary for creating better interactions with clients and other partners. As a consequence of this, having these talents is essential.

The purpose of this research was to determine whether or not there is a correlation between adaptive leaders' contextual intelligence and the level of employee performance in star-rated hotels located in Mombasa County, Kenya. According to the findings, adaptive leaders' contextual intelligence had a discernible impact on the overall performance of the workforce. As a result of the findings of the research, star-rated hotels in Mombasa should put adaptive leaders' contextual intelligence into practice in order to improve the performance of their staff.

According to the findings of this study, the most significant effects of adaptive leaders' contextual intelligence on employee performance may be seen at hotels located in Mombasa County. According to the findings of the study, key leaders, particularly chief executive officers of hotels, should place a greater emphasis on the execution of initiatives that increase adaptive leaders' contextual intelligence.

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