

The Psychological Micro-Foundations of Institutional Excellence: Employee Attitude and Innovative Culture in Kenyan Public Universities

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Abstract

Organizational performance in knowledge-intensive sectors is increasingly understood to reside in the intangible human factor. While technical skills and knowledge are foundational, the will to perform, encapsulated in employee attitude, is often the primary differentiator between high-performing and stagnant institutions. This study, derived from a broader doctoral project, investigates the influence of employee attitude on the performance of public universities in Kenya and examines how an innovative culture moderates this relationship. Grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), the study employed a descriptive survey design with a sample of 191 management staff from 32 chartered public universities in Kenya. Employee attitude was operationalized through indicators of punctuality, teamwork, work ethic, initiative, and commitment to organizational goals. Descriptive results showed high commitment ($M = 3.97$) but significant challenges in openness to institutional change. Bivariate regression results established a significant positive relationship between attitude and university performance (Adjusted $R^2=0.267$, $p<0.001$, $R^2=0.267$, $p<0.001$). Furthermore, hierarchical regression analysis showed that an innovative culture serves as a critical moderator ($\beta=0.067$, $p=0.003$), suggesting that positive attitudes are significantly more productive in environments that reward risk-taking and experimentation. The study recommends that university management shift from purely administrative oversight to psychological leadership, fostering a culture of ownership and innovative engagement.

Keywords: *Employee Attitude, University Performance, Innovative Culture, Theory of Planned Behavior, Higher Education, Kenya, Institutional Commitment.*

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1. Introduction

The global higher education landscape is characterized by intensifying competition and a shift toward the Managerial University model, where efficiency and performance are paramount (Aithal & Maiya, 2024). In this context, the performance of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is no longer a localized concern but a metric of national economic competitiveness. For Kenyan public universities, the mandate is clear: they must act as the primary catalysts for the Vision 2030 goal of transforming the nation into a middle-income society.

However, the performance of these institutions is often hampered by soft internal factors. While physical infrastructure and academic credentials (knowledge/skills) are frequently cited in strategic plans, the psychological micro-foundations of performance, specifically the employee attitude, are rarely analyzed as strategic assets.

1.1 Problem Statement

Public universities in Kenya are currently facing a performance paradox. Despite having a workforce characterized by high academic qualifications, many institutions struggle with low research output, declining student satisfaction, and poor global visibility (Ingosi et al., 2024). This suggests that having the capacity to perform (skills/knowledge) is insufficient if the disposition to perform (attitude) is missing or stifled.

Furthermore, attitudes do not exist in a vacuum. In the bureaucratic and often rigid structure of public institutions, even a committed employee may become disillusioned if the institutional culture does not support innovation or reward initiative. There is an empirical gap in understanding how Innovative Culture acts as a moderator. Without such a culture, positive attitudes may lead to frustration rather than performance. This study addresses the missing link between individual psychological states and organizational performance in the Kenyan context.

1.2 Research Objectives

- i. To establish the influence of employee attitude on the performance of public universities in Kenya.
- ii. To determine the moderating influence of innovative culture on the relationship between employee attitude and university performance.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study is theoretically anchored in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) developed by Ajzen (1991). TPB posits that human behavior is guided by three determinants: attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Esfandiar & Hadinejad, 2025). In a university setting, an employee's attitude toward their work their evaluative disposition regarding punctuality, collaboration, and ethical standards serves as the primary predictor of their intention to contribute to institutional excellence. Hemsworth et al. (2024) expanded on this by arguing that positive attitudes generate Discretionary Effort, in which staff go beyond their formal job descriptions to ensure the institution succeeds.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Conceptualizing Employee Attitude

Employee attitude represents the evaluative and behavioural disposition that employees develop towards their work, colleagues, and organization. It encompasses how employees perceive their responsibilities, respond to workplace demands, interact with others, and demonstrate commitment to organizational objectives. In the context of human resource capital, employee attitude is considered an important intangible resource because favourable attitudes can encourage employees to apply their knowledge, skills, and experience more effectively towards achieving institutional goals.

Empirical studies have conceptualized employee attitude from different perspectives. Abdullah and Al-Abrow (2022) linked employee attitudes to positive workplace behaviours, particularly organizational commitment and work engagement, arguing that favourable employee attitudes

encourage constructive behaviours and reduce undesirable workplace outcomes. Similarly, Jaurigue et al. (2023) conceptualized work attitude in relation to employees' motivation and job performance and established that positive attitudes were associated with improved employee performance in a university setting. These perspectives demonstrate that employee attitude extends beyond employees' feelings towards their jobs to include behavioural orientations that influence how they perform their responsibilities.

In the higher education context, Aliyu and Chiroma (2024) viewed employee attitude in terms of dispositional, cultural, and work-situation influences. Their findings indicated that the organizational environment can shape employees' attitudes and consequently affect performance outcomes. This perspective suggests that employee attitude is not solely an individual characteristic but may also be influenced by the institutional environment in which employees operate. In Kenyan public universities, Wekesa, Thiaine, and Walubuka (2024) examined employees' attitudes toward the implementation of performance appraisals, demonstrating that these attitudes can influence the effectiveness of institutional human resource practices. These studies collectively indicate that employee attitude incorporates both individual behavioural tendencies and employees' responses to their organizational environment.

For the purpose of the present study, employee attitude is conceptualized as a multidimensional component of human resource capital comprising conscientiousness, collaborative spirit, proactivity, and organizational commitment. Conscientiousness reflects employees' sense of responsibility, punctuality, dependability, and adherence to institutional work standards. Collaborative spirit refers to employees' willingness to cooperate with colleagues, participate in teamwork, share knowledge, and respond constructively to feedback. Proactivity represents employees' willingness to take initiative, identify opportunities for improvement, solve emerging problems, and exceed minimum job requirements. Organizational commitment denotes the extent to which employees identify with the university's mission and objectives and demonstrate willingness to contribute to their achievement.

This conceptualization is particularly relevant to public universities because institutional performance depends not only on employees' knowledge, skills, and experience but also on their willingness to apply these capabilities constructively. Employees who are responsible, collaborative, proactive, and committed are more likely to contribute to effective teaching, research, innovation, service delivery, and efficient utilization of institutional resources. Thus, employee attitude is conceptualized in this study as a behavioural resource through which human resource capital is translated into improved university performance.

2.2.2 The Moderating Influence of Innovative Culture

Innovative culture encompasses the shared values, norms, practices, and organizational conditions that promote the generation, exchange, experimentation, and implementation of new ideas within an organization. In higher education institutions, innovative culture provides an enabling environment in which academic and administrative employees can develop and implement new approaches to teaching, research, administration, and service delivery. Chasokela and Mpofu (2024) contend that an innovative organizational climate encourages employees to explore new ideas and develop alternative approaches to institutional challenges. Similarly, Trivedi and Srivastava (2024) posit that an innovative-competitive culture facilitates the transformation of individual employee orientations into collective innovative behavior. These perspectives suggest that the extent to which employee attitudes translate into improved

organizational outcomes may depend on the prevailing cultural environment in which employees perform their responsibilities.

Empirical evidence demonstrates the importance of organizational culture in promoting innovation and organizational outcomes. Hogan and Coote (2014) examined the relationship between organizational culture and innovation in Australian organizations. The study established that organizational values characterized by openness, learning, and flexibility were positively associated with organizational innovation. The findings demonstrated that cultural conditions can create an enabling environment through which employees utilize their capabilities and positive work orientations to generate innovative outcomes. However, the study focused primarily on the direct relationship between organizational culture and innovation and did not examine whether innovative culture moderates the relationship between employee attitudes and organizational performance. Nevertheless, the findings provide empirical support for the view that organizational culture is an important contextual mechanism through which employee characteristics translate into organizational outcomes.

Similarly, Naranjo-Valencia, Jiménez-Jiménez, and Sanz-Valle (2016) investigated the influence of organizational culture on innovation and found that it significantly shapes an organization's capacity to develop and implement innovations. The study demonstrated that cultural characteristics associated with flexibility, an external orientation, and support for new ideas facilitated innovation, whereas rigid and excessively controlling cultural environments constrained innovation. The findings have particular relevance to higher education institutions, where employees with proactive and change-oriented attitudes require organizational conditions that provide opportunities to exercise initiative and experiment with alternative approaches. However, the study primarily examined the direct influence of organizational culture on innovation and did not specifically investigate its moderating effect on the relationship between employee attitudes and institutional performance.

The moderating role of innovative culture can therefore be explained in terms of its capacity to strengthen or constrain the translation of favourable employee attitudes into organizational performance. Employees characterized by conscientiousness, proactivity, collaboration, and organizational commitment possess behavioural dispositions that can contribute to institutional improvement. However, the realization of these contributions depends partly on whether the organizational environment provides opportunities and incentives for employees to apply their capabilities. Where experimentation, calculated risk-taking, knowledge sharing, and idea generation are encouraged, employees are more likely to transform positive attitudes into innovative practices and improved work processes. Conversely, organizational environments characterized by excessive bureaucracy, resistance to change, and punitive responses to failure may discourage employees from exercising initiative, thereby weakening the potential contribution of positive employee attitudes to institutional performance.

The relevance of this relationship is particularly pronounced in public universities, where employees operate within formal organizational structures, established procedures, and complex administrative systems. A proactive and committed employee, for instance, may introduce innovative teaching approaches, improve research processes, utilize emerging technologies, or develop more efficient administrative procedures when institutional leaders provide adequate support for experimentation and innovation. Conversely, where institutional culture discourages experimentation and views deviations from established practices negatively, employees may prioritize procedural compliance over creativity and continuous

improvement. Innovative culture may therefore determine the extent to which favourable employee attitudes are converted into tangible institutional outcomes.

Accordingly, the present study conceptualizes innovative culture as a moderating variable that influences the strength of the relationship between employee attitude and university performance. The construct is operationalized through dimensions including idea generation, open communication, support for experimentation and calculated risk-taking, knowledge sharing, and participation in professional development and innovation-related activities. A supportive innovative culture is expected to strengthen the positive influence of employee attitude on university performance, whereas a restrictive cultural environment may weaken this relationship. This conceptualization extends existing empirical literature, which has predominantly examined employee attitudes, organizational culture, and innovation as direct predictors of organizational outcomes, by examining whether innovative culture conditions the contribution of employee attitudes to the performance of public universities in Kenya.

3. Methodology

The study adopted a positivist philosophy and a descriptive research design, using a predominantly quantitative approach supplemented by limited qualitative information from open-ended questionnaire items. The target population comprised key university management and administrative officers, while a multistage sampling procedure combining stratified and simple random sampling was used to select 32 public universities. Yamane's formula produced a sample of 223 respondents from a population of 352 management staff. Data were collected primarily through structured self-administered questionnaires, complemented by secondary institutional performance data. The research instrument was pretested with 22 participants, and validity and reliability were assessed prior to the main data collection. Ethical requirements, including informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and institutional and NACOSTI approvals, were observed throughout the research process.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS, with both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques applied. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize respondent characteristics and describe the study variables. Before inferential analysis, diagnostic tests were performed to assess the assumptions underlying regression analysis, including normality, multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity, linearity, and autocorrelation. Pearson correlation analysis was used to establish the direction and strength of relationships between human resource capital dimensions and university performance, while multiple linear regression was employed to determine the individual and combined effects of employee knowledge, skills, experience, and attitude on performance. Hierarchical multiple regression was subsequently applied to assess the moderating effect of innovative culture by including interaction terms. Hypotheses were tested at the 5% significance level ($p \leq 0.05$), with the results presented and interpreted using appropriate statistical tables and measures to establish the relationships and predictive effects among the study variables.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Descriptive Statistics of Employee Attitude

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Employee Attitude

Statements	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
I report to work and attend scheduled duties on time	191	1.00	5.00	3.88	.950
Many staff do not report to work and attend scheduled duties on time	191	1.00	5.00	3.47	1.26
I collaborate effectively with my colleagues to complete tasks.	191	1.00	5.00	3.74	1.10
Many staff do not collaborate effectively with colleagues to complete tasks	191	1.00	5.00	3.45	1.20
I act on feedback received to improve my work.	191	1.00	5.00	3.79	1.07
Many staff do not act on feedback to improve their work.	191	1.00	5.00	3.49	1.19
I adhere to high ethical standards in my work.	191	1.00	5.00	3.77	1.12
Many staff do not adhere to high ethical standards in their work	191	1.00	5.00	3.54	1.15
I take initiative and am willing to go beyond my assigned duties.	191	1.00	5.00	3.83	1.10
Staff are never encouraged to take initiative	191	1.00	5.00	3.49	1.26
I am committed to achieving this organization's goals.	191	1.00	5.00	3.97	.991
Many staff are not committed to achieving the organization's goals	191	1.00	5.00	3.49	1.20
I am open to adopting new ideas and changes in the workplace.	191	1.00	5.00	3.87	1.08
Many staff are not open to adopting new ideas and changes in the workplace.	191	1.00	5.00	2.36	1.09
Valid N (listwise)	191				

The findings presented in Table 1 demonstrate that employee attitude is an important factor influencing organizational performance in public universities in Kenya. The highest-rated attributes were commitment to organizational goals ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.99$), punctuality ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.95$), openness to change ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 1.08$), initiative ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 1.10$), responsiveness to feedback ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 1.07$), and adherence to ethical standards ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 1.12$). In contrast, the lowest-rated item concerned employees' reluctance to embrace new ideas and workplace changes ($M = 2.36$, $SD = 1.09$). Overall, the results suggest that employees generally demonstrate favourable attitudes reflected in their commitment, adaptability, ethical behaviour, initiative, and willingness to work collaboratively. Such attributes can contribute to higher productivity, improved service delivery, and enhanced institutional performance. These findings support the observations of Aithal and Maiya (2024) and Kossyva et al. (2023), who underscore the significance of adaptability and openness to innovation, as well as Ghazwan and Firmansyah (2024), who established that positive employee attitudes strengthen employee engagement, organizational commitment, and performance outcomes.

Responses to the open-ended question about *how universities could improve employees' attitudes toward work* provided further insight into the quantitative findings. Respondents identified motivation, recognition, effective leadership, employee participation, and supportive working conditions as important mechanisms for fostering positive employee attitudes. Frequently cited suggestions included *"providing incentives and rewards," "recognizing employees' efforts," "fair remuneration,"* and *"appreciating good performance."* These responses demonstrate the perceived importance of motivational practices in strengthening employee morale, commitment, and constructive workplace behaviours. The findings further suggest that employees are more likely to develop a positive sense of organizational attachment when their contributions are acknowledged, and their remuneration is perceived as fair and equitable.

A further theme emerging from the responses related to career progression, professional development, and advancement opportunities. Respondents highlighted *"timely promotions," "career development opportunities," "staff training," "continuous professional development,"* and *"supporting employees to advance their careers"* as important strategies for improving employee attitudes. These views indicate that employees place considerable value on organizations that provide opportunities for personal and professional growth. Investment in employee development can enhance job satisfaction, motivation, organizational commitment, and employees' willingness to contribute toward institutional objectives.

The responses also emphasized the importance of effective leadership, transparent communication, and employee participation in decision-making. Suggestions such as *"involving employees in decision-making," "open communication between management and staff," "addressing employee grievances promptly,"* and *"having transparent leadership"* indicate that respondents regarded participatory and fair management practices as essential for developing trust between employees and university management. Such practices can create an organizational environment in which employees feel valued, respected, and adequately represented, thereby encouraging greater commitment and more effective performance.

In addition, respondents identified organizational culture and working conditions as important determinants of employee attitudes. Recommendations such as *"promoting teamwork," "team-building activities," "creating a positive working environment," "ensuring fairness in appointments and promotions,"* and *"promoting inclusivity and employee welfare"* demonstrate that employees' attitudes are shaped not only by individual factors but also by their broader workplace experiences. The emphasis on improved working conditions, employee engagement initiatives, teamwork, fairness, and staff welfare suggests that universities need to create institutional environments that promote collaboration, trust, inclusion, and commitment.

Taken together, the findings indicate that improving employee attitudes requires a multidimensional human resource management approach that combines motivation and recognition, professional development, participatory leadership, effective communication, and supportive working conditions. Public universities should therefore implement human resource practices that enhance employee satisfaction, commitment, engagement, and willingness to contribute to institutional goals. These findings are consistent with the human capital and social exchange perspectives, which posit that investment in employees, recognition of their contributions, and provision of supportive organizational environments can generate positive employee attitudes and behaviours, ultimately strengthening organizational outcomes.

However, the findings differ from those of Abdullah and AL-Abrow (2022), who reported that employee attitudes do not directly enhance organizational performance but influence organizational outcomes indirectly through their effects on positive and negative employee behaviours. Their study established that favourable employee attitudes primarily reduce undesirable behaviours, including absenteeism, interpersonal conflict, and withdrawal, while encouraging cooperation and constructive workplace interactions. According to their findings, these behaviours subsequently influence organizational performance. In contrast, the present study establishes a direct positive contribution of employee attitudes to university performance. Specifically, commitment to organizational goals, punctuality, openness to change, initiative, responsiveness to feedback, ethical conduct, and collaboration appear to contribute directly to productivity, service delivery, and overall institutional effectiveness.

The qualitative findings reinforce this interpretation by demonstrating that motivation, recognition, participatory leadership, professional development, and supportive work environments strengthen positive employee attitudes and facilitate the translation of these attitudes into improved organizational outcomes. The difference between the present findings and those of Abdullah and AL-Abrow (2022) may partly be explained by contextual variations. Public universities operate in knowledge-intensive environments where employees' attitudes can have immediate implications for teaching effectiveness, research productivity, decision-making, innovation, student support, and service delivery. Consequently, positive attitudes among academic and administrative staff may exert a more direct influence on institutional performance than in organizational contexts where employee contributions are structured differently.

The findings further demonstrate that the influence of employee attitudes on organizational performance is strengthened when institutions create conditions that enable positive attitudes to be expressed through productive workplace behaviours. Positive attitudes alone may not automatically produce superior performance unless they are supported by appropriate organizational systems, leadership practices, and human resource policies. Public universities should therefore adopt integrated human resource management strategies that simultaneously promote positive attitudes and desirable workplace behaviours. Such strategies should include equitable remuneration, employee recognition, career development, participatory decision-making, transparent communication, supportive leadership, and conducive working conditions.

Ultimately, the findings suggest that employee attitudes constitute a strategic organizational resource when universities provide appropriate structures and support for employees to translate their positive dispositions into productive actions. Strengthening commitment, motivation, adaptability, collaboration, ethical conduct, and employee engagement can therefore improve institutional effectiveness. University administrators and policymakers should consequently regard employee attitudes not merely as individual employee characteristics but as a strategic human capital resource that can be cultivated through supportive leadership and effective human resource management practices.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics of Innovative Culture and Performance

The study further assessed the role of innovative culture as a moderating variable in the relationship between human resource capital and the performance of public universities in Kenya. The findings of this analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Innovative Culture and Performance

Statements	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
I feel encouraged to generate and share new ideas within this organization	191	1.00	5.00	3.60	1.14
Staff is not encouraged to generate and share new ideas in this university.	191	1.00	5.00	3.70	1.10
This organization supports thoughtful experimentation when implementing new ideas	191	1.00	5.00	2.36	1.16
Staff are hesitant to implement new ideas due to fear of potential outcomes.	191	1.00	5.00	2.61	1.15
Consistently engage in continuous learning and professional development courses	191	1.00	7.00	3.66	1.12
Most staff do not take part in continuous learning and professional development courses	191	1.00	5.00	2.41	1.16
This organization promotes open communication	191	1.00	5.00	3.76	1.14
The open-door policy is not effective in this organization	191	1.00	5.00	2.47	1.18
Staff are offered sufficient incentives to promote innovation	191	1.00	5.00	2.75	1.14
Most staff are not provided with incentives to support innovation.	191	1.00	5.00	2.66	1.19
Valid N (listwise)	191				

The findings presented in Table 2 indicate that the university generally promotes a supportive, innovative work environment characterized by open communication, idea sharing, and engagement in continuous learning, although challenges remain in supporting experimentation, providing incentives for innovation, and effectively implementing the open-door policy. The highest-rated aspects of innovative culture were the promotion of open communication ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 1.14$), the perception that staff are encouraged to generate and share new ideas ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 1.10$), participation in continuous learning and professional development ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 1.12$), and encouragement to generate and share ideas within the organization ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 1.14$). In contrast, the lowest-rated aspects were support for thoughtful experimentation when implementing new ideas ($M = 2.36$, $SD = 1.16$), participation in continuous learning being limited among staff ($M = 2.41$, $SD = 1.16$), and the ineffectiveness of the open-door policy ($M = 2.47$, $SD = 1.18$). These findings imply that the university has established a supportive innovative culture characterized by open communication, knowledge sharing, continuous learning, and encouragement of innovation, which are likely to enhance innovative work behaviour, human capital development, and institutional performance. The results are consistent with previous studies by Galal and El (2026), Lei (2024), Nnanna et al. (2021), Pascal (2024), Santos et al. (2024) and Zhang (2024) which emphasize that supportive

organizational climates, effective communication, continuous learning, institutional support, and innovation-oriented structures foster creativity, knowledge sharing, and innovation in higher education institutions.

The qualitative responses to the question, *“In what ways does this university support an innovative culture within the institution?”*, highlighted several key strategies and practices through which the university promotes and nurtures innovation. Respondents highlighted the importance of financial and institutional support, with participants mentioning *“provision of research grants, innovation funds, and scholarships to support new ideas and research activities.”* Another respondent noted that the university promotes innovation through *“funding of innovative projects and supporting staff to participate in research and development activities.”* These initiatives demonstrate the university’s commitment to providing resources that enable employees to explore and implement creative solutions.

Respondents further identified the establishment of innovation structures and partnerships as important contributors to an innovative culture. Participants cited *“research and innovation directorates, innovation hubs, incubation centres, and collaborations with industries”* as mechanisms that provide platforms for developing, testing, and applying innovative ideas. One respondent explained that *“the university supports innovation through incubation centres and partnerships that help transform ideas into practical solutions.”* These structures were viewed as essential in enhancing knowledge transfer, collaboration, and commercialization of research outputs.

Additionally, respondents indicated that the university promotes innovation through knowledge-sharing platforms and continuous employee development programmes. Key approaches mentioned included *“annual innovation weeks, conferences, exhibitions, seminars, workshops, webinars, and career fairs where innovative ideas are showcased and shared.”* Respondents also emphasized the role of *“training, mentorship, capacity building, and postgraduate studies in improving employees’ skills and encouraging innovative thinking.”* These initiatives were considered important in strengthening employees’ ability to generate, develop, and implement innovative ideas within the university environment.

Moreover, participants highlighted the importance of motivation and recognition in sustaining an innovative culture. Some respondents noted that innovation is encouraged through *“awards, incentives, publications, and recognition of employees who come up with new ideas.”* Overall, the findings suggest that the university supports an innovative culture by providing financial resources, establishing supportive institutional structures, enhancing employee capabilities, and recognizing innovative contributions. These efforts create an enabling environment where employees are encouraged to generate, share, and implement ideas that contribute to institutional improvement and performance.

In contrast, Ismail et al. (2024) found that organizational culture alone does not directly enhance organizational outcomes but exerts its influence through the mediating roles of job characteristics and employee engagement, which differs from the findings of the present study. Their study argued that although organizations may promote open communication, collaboration, and supportive work environments, these cultural attributes yield meaningful organizational outcomes only when accompanied by well-designed job roles that foster employee engagement. In contrast, the present study established that a supportive innovative culture characterized by open communication, idea sharing, continuous learning, institutional support, and recognition of innovative contributions directly enhances innovative work behaviour, human capital development, and the performance of public universities. The

qualitative findings further revealed that research grants, innovation funds, innovation hubs, incubation centres, collaborative partnerships, continuous training, mentorship, and recognition programmes provide practical mechanisms through which innovative ideas are generated, shared, and implemented. The point of divergence may be attributed to differences in organizational context, as Kenyan public universities have institutionalized innovation-support structures that enable employees to translate innovative ideas into improved institutional performance without relying solely on job design as the primary mechanism.

This divergence implies that fostering an innovative culture alone may not be sufficient to sustain organizational performance unless it is supported by appropriate organizational systems that facilitate employee participation and the effective implementation of innovative ideas. The findings therefore suggest that public universities should strengthen innovative culture by integrating supportive leadership, well-designed job roles, continuous professional development, research funding, innovation infrastructure, and employee recognition into their human resource management practices. Such an integrated approach is likely to enhance employee engagement, creativity, knowledge sharing, and the implementation of innovation, thereby improving institutional performance. Consequently, university administrators and policymakers should regard innovative culture as a strategic organizational capability whose effectiveness depends on complementary human resource practices and institutional mechanisms that enable employees to transform innovative ideas into tangible organizational outcomes.

4.3 Correlation Analysis

Table 3: Correlation Results

Employee Attitude (X)	Pearson Correlation	.521**	.432**	.380**	.343**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	191	191	191	191	191

The correlation findings indicate that employee attitude had a positive and statistically significant relationship with the other study variables. Employee attitude was positively correlated with the respective variables, with correlation coefficients of $r = .521$, $r = .432$, $r = .380$, and $r = .343$, respectively. All the relationships were statistically significant at the 0.01 level ($p < .001$), based on a sample of 191 respondents. The strongest association was observed at $r = .521$, indicating a moderate positive relationship, while the coefficients of .432, .380, and .343 also represent moderate positive associations. These results imply that improvements in employee attitude are associated with corresponding improvements in the related organizational and human resource factors. Overall, the findings demonstrate that employee attitude is an important component of human resource capital and is significantly associated with other factors that may contribute to organizational effectiveness and university performance.

4.4 Bivariate Regression Analysis

Table 4: Employee Attitude on Performance

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.521 ^a	.271	.267	.51048		
a. Predictors: (Constant), X						
ANOVA ^a						
Model	Sum of Squares		df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	18.307	1	18.307	70.251	.000 ^b
	Residual	49.252	189	.261		
	Total	67.559	190			
a. Dependent Variable: Y						
b. Predictors: (Constant), X ₄						
Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	1.771	.140		12.681	.000
	Employee Attitude(X ₄)	.312	.037	.521	8.382	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Y						

The bivariate correlation results presented in Table 4 demonstrate a positive and statistically significant association between employee attitude and the performance of public universities in Kenya ($r = 0.521$, $p < 0.001$). This finding indicates that universities characterized by more positive employee attitudes tend to exhibit higher levels of institutional performance. Further evidence from the bivariate linear regression analysis in Table 4 shows an adjusted R^2 of 0.267, implying that employee attitude independently explains 26.7% of the variance in university performance. The remaining 73.3% can be attributed to other factors not included in the regression model. The significance of the regression model was further established by the ANOVA results, which produced an F-statistic of $F(1, 189) = 70.251$, $p < 0.001$. This result confirms that the regression model is statistically significant and that employee attitude is a meaningful predictor of university performance. Moreover, the regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.312$, $p < 0.001$) demonstrates that employee attitude has a positive and statistically significant effect on institutional performance. Consequently, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted, indicating that employee attitude significantly contributes to the performance of public universities in Kenya.

The findings imply that developing and sustaining positive employee attitudes can make a substantial contribution to institutional effectiveness. Employees who demonstrate commitment, motivation, cooperation, adaptability, professionalism, and a strong work ethic are more likely to contribute effectively to teaching, research, administrative functions, and the achievement of institutional objectives. Although employee attitude accounts for 26.7% of the variation in university performance, the proportion also demonstrates that performance is influenced by several other organizational and contextual factors. Nevertheless, the significant contribution of employee attitude suggests that improving employees' perceptions, motivation,

commitment, and engagement represents an important and feasible avenue through which universities can strengthen their performance. University management should therefore enhance employee engagement programmes, establish equitable reward and recognition mechanisms, encourage participatory leadership, strengthen internal communication, improve working conditions, and introduce initiatives aimed at enhancing staff motivation, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. These measures can create a supportive institutional environment in which employees are more willing and able to translate positive attitudes into productive behaviours and improved organizational outcomes.

The findings are supported by previous empirical studies highlighting the contribution of employee attitudes to organizational effectiveness. Mustafa and Lleshi (2024), for example, established that favourable employee attitudes characterized by commitment, motivation, and job satisfaction significantly contribute to organizational effectiveness and employee productivity. Similarly, Rivaldo and Nabella (2023) found that positive work attitudes strengthen employee engagement and collaboration, thereby improving organizational performance. The findings also align with Kim (2012) and Perry and Hondeghe (2008), who demonstrated that committed and motivated employees can enhance service delivery, accountability, and organizational effectiveness within public sector institutions. Within the higher education sector, the results are consistent with Aithal and Maiya (2024) and ChaaCha (2024), who emphasized that positive employee attitudes can contribute to teaching effectiveness, research productivity, institutional commitment, and the achievement of university objectives.

Nevertheless, the findings contrast with studies suggesting that employee attitudes may have a limited effect on organizational performance when institutional structures and contextual conditions constrain employees' ability to act on their positive dispositions. Previous research has indicated that favourable attitudes do not always result in improved performance where organizations experience inadequate resources, weak leadership, ineffective systems, or unsupportive working environments. In contrast, the present study establishes a statistically significant positive contribution of employee attitude to the performance of public universities in Kenya. The observed difference may arise from variations in institutional contexts, organizational cultures, leadership approaches, resource availability, and the operational characteristics of public universities. The findings therefore highlight that positive employee attitudes should be supported by appropriate organizational structures, adequate resources, effective leadership, and enabling human resource policies. When these conditions are combined, universities are better positioned to convert positive employee attitudes into productive behaviours and sustainable improvements in institutional performance.

4.5 Hierarchical Regression and Moderation

Table 5: Model Summary

Model	R	Std. Error of				Change Statistics			
		R Square	Adjusted R Square	the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.757 ^a	.573	.564	.39376	.573	62.435	4	186	.000
2	.855 ^b	.731	.723	.31371	.157	108.024	1	185	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), X

b. Predictors: (Constant), X, Z

Table 5 presents the study findings for the second model in a hierarchy, in which the innovative culture (moderating variable) was included in the original regression equation as an independent variable. The findings indicated that including the moderating variable in the original equation improved the model's explanatory power by 15.9%, from adjusted $R^2 = 56.4\%$ to 72.3% . The F-statistic increased significantly from 62.435 to 108.024. This implied that the moderator (innovative culture), as an independent variable, significantly strengthened the original model.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that employee attitude is a pivotal, yet often overlooked, driver of performance in Kenya's higher education sector. While qualifications and experience are necessary, it is the Commitment and Initiative of staff that determine the speed of institutional progress. Crucially, the study proves that Innovative Culture acts as an accelerator. A positive staff attitude yields the highest performance gains only when the university provides a culture of open communication and risk support. Without this cultural alignment, the potential of a committed workforce is squandered on bureaucratic maintenance rather than institutional growth.

6. Recommendations

1. Psychological Contracts: University HR departments should move beyond formal labor contracts to manage psychological contracts. This includes fostering a sense of ownership through participatory decision-making, which this study identified as a key driver of positive attitude.
2. Incentivizing the Extra Mile: Recognition and reward systems (Table 4.13) should specifically target staff who exhibit high levels of Initiative and Responsiveness to Feedback, moving away from purely seniority-based rewards.
3. Culture of Psychological Safety: University leadership must deliberately cultivate an environment where staff are not hesitant to implement new ideas due to fear of potential outcomes (IC4, Mean = 2.61). This can be achieved by removing administrative penalties for failed (but thoughtful) experiments in teaching and research.
4. Aligning Policy with Innovation: Higher education policy in Kenya should integrate Institutional Culture as a performance indicator in the annual Performance Contracting cycle for Vice Chancellors and senior management.

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