

Navigating Institutional Performance through Employee Experience: The Moderating Role of Innovative Culture in Kenyan Public Universities

Evelyn Karwirwa Gitonga^{*}, Susan Nzioki¹, Nancy Rintari¹

Business School, Kenya Methodist University, Kenya

^{*}Corresponding author email: evelynegitonga2012@gmail.com

Accepted: 31 July 2026 || Published: 19 August 2026

Abstract

In the contemporary global knowledge economy, the performance of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is a critical indicator of national development. However, public universities in Kenya face systemic performance challenges despite possessing a cadre of highly experienced academic and administrative staff. This study, extracted from a broader doctoral research project, focuses specifically on the influence of employee experience on the performance of public universities in Kenya and the moderating effect of an innovative culture. Using a pragmatic research philosophy and a descriptive survey design, data were collected from 191 management staff across 32 chartered public universities. The study operationalized employee experience through tenure, role diversity, task complexity, and supervisory responsibility. Findings from bivariate regression analysis revealed that employee experience significantly predicts institutional performance (Adjusted $R^2=0.231$, $p<0.001$, $R^2=0.231$, $p<0.001$), explaining 23.1% of the variance. Furthermore, hierarchical regression analysis established that an innovative culture serves as a vital catalyst, significantly strengthening the relationship between experience and performance ($\beta=0.070$, $p=0.008$, $\beta=0.070$, $p=0.008$). The study concludes that while accumulated experience provides institutional memory, its value is only fully realized within a culture that supports experimentation and risk-taking. The paper recommends that university leadership move beyond seniority-based promotions to implement strategic role rotation and mentorship programs that keep institutional experience dynamic and innovation-oriented.

Keywords: *Employee Experience, University Performance, Innovative Culture, Job Characteristics Theory, Higher Education in Kenya, Institutional Memory.*

How to Cite: Gitonga, E. K., Nzioki, S., & Rintari, N. (2026). Navigating Institutional Performance through Employee Experience: The Moderating Role of Innovative Culture in Kenyan Public Universities. *Journal of Human Resource & Leadership*, 6(2), 68-81.

1. Introduction

The landscape of higher education worldwide is undergoing a fundamental transformation. Modern universities are no longer viewed merely as centers for teaching but as complex organizations responsible for research productivity, societal problem-solving, and economic innovation (Aithal & Maiya, 2024). Consequently, university performance is increasingly measured through multidimensional indicators, including global rankings (Webometrics), research impact, student satisfaction, and the ability to attract external funding (Rehman, 2025).

In Kenya, the growth of the university sector has been exponential since the enactment of the Universities Act of 2012. However, this growth has not been matched by a linear improvement in performance. Public universities are currently grappling with financial instability, declining instructional quality, and low global visibility (Nation Media, 2024). While investments in physical infrastructure and academic qualifications are common, the intangible assets, specifically the accumulated experience of the workforce, remain under-researched.

1.1 Problem Statement

Despite the strategic importance of Kenyan public universities to the national development goals of Vision 2030, many of these institutions are underperforming. A significant paradox exists: these universities employ staff with long tenures and extensive supervisory experience, yet institutional outcomes, such as research output and graduate employability, remain low (Ingosi et al., 2024).

Existing literature often treats experience as a simple demographic variable (years of service) rather than a strategic resource. Furthermore, there is a lack of understanding regarding how the organizational environment, specifically an Innovative Culture, interacts with this experience. There is a risk that in rigid, bureaucratic public institutions, long-serving employees may become resistant to change, thereby stifling rather than supporting institutional growth. This study addresses this gap by assessing how the depth and breadth of employee experience influence university performance and determining if a culture of innovation can unlock the latent potential of this experience.

1.2 Objective of the Study

The primary objective of the study was to examine the influence of employee experience on the performance of public universities in Kenya and to evaluate the moderating role of innovative culture in this relationship.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study is anchored in the Job Characteristics Theory (JCT) developed by Hackman and Oldham (1971). JCT proposes that the design of work, including the variety of skills used, task identity, and the level of autonomy, shapes an employee's psychological state, which in turn drives performance (Winkelhaus et al., 2022).

In the context of this study, Experience is viewed through the lens of JCT as a mechanism for job enrichment. As employees move through different roles and manage increasingly complex tasks, they develop a sense of meaningfulness in their work and a deeper sense of responsibility for institutional outcomes. However, JCT also suggests that if a job lacks feedback or growth opportunities, even an experienced employee may suffer from reduced motivation (Tan et al., 2023).

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1. Conceptualizing Employee Experience

Recent empirical evidence demonstrates that employee experience is an important contributor to organizational performance, particularly through its influence on employee engagement, innovation, productivity, and commitment. Kimonyo (2024) examined the impact of employee experience on organizational outcomes, drawing on evidence from 250 organizations, and found that employees with richer work experiences demonstrated higher levels of innovation, productivity, and engagement. The study further showed that exposure to diverse

responsibilities, training opportunities, and complex assignments enhanced employees' capacity to respond to changing organizational demands. These findings suggest that employee experience extends beyond length of service to include the quality and diversity of employees' workplace experiences. Employees who are exposed to challenging assignments and continuous development opportunities are likely to acquire broader competencies, strengthen their problem-solving abilities, and make more meaningful contributions to organizational objectives. The findings are particularly relevant to the present study because they provide direct empirical support for the relationship between employee experience and organizational performance.

Similarly, Başar (2024) examined the relationship between employee experience and employee engagement, with particular attention to managerial support and collaboration, organizational identification and development, and career-focused human resource practices. The study found that positive employee experiences were associated with higher levels of employee engagement. Managerial support, opportunities for development, collaboration, and career-oriented human resource practices were particularly important in shaping employees' workplace experiences. These findings indicate that employee experience is influenced not only by employees' accumulated work exposure but also by the organizational environment in which that experience is acquired. Supportive management, opportunities to develop competencies, and exposure to varied responsibilities can strengthen employees' engagement and their capacity to perform effectively. In the context of public universities, such conditions are important because academic and administrative staff operate in complex environments that require continuous learning, collaboration, and adaptation to changing institutional demands.

Further evidence is provided by Ahmad and Porkodi (2024), who conducted a systematic literature review and meta-analysis examining the relationship between employee experience management and organizational sustainability and performance. Their analysis of empirical studies established a positive association between employee experience and organizational performance. The findings demonstrate that organizations that deliberately manage employees' experiences through supportive practices, development opportunities, effective communication, and conducive working environments are better positioned to achieve positive organizational outcomes. This evidence strengthens the argument that employee experience should be regarded as a strategic human resource consideration rather than merely an employee-related workplace issue. The meta-analytic evidence is particularly important because it demonstrates that the positive association between employee experience and organizational outcomes is not limited to a single organizational setting but is evident across studies and contexts.

In the higher education context, Udessa and Huluka (2024) investigated employee engagement and organizational performance in public universities in Ethiopia. Their findings demonstrated that employee engagement was significantly associated with institutional performance, highlighting the importance of employees' workplace experiences in achieving organizational objectives. The study is particularly relevant to the present research because it was conducted at public universities in an African context, where institutions face comparable challenges, including resource constraints, changing stakeholder expectations, and the need to improve teaching, research, and administrative services. The findings suggest that when university employees experience supportive organizational conditions and opportunities to contribute meaningfully to institutional activities, they are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of engagement and performance. The study therefore provides contextual evidence that the

effective management of employees' experiences can contribute to improved institutional outcomes in higher education.

Collectively, these studies demonstrate that employee experience is an important human capital resource with implications for organizational performance. Kimonyo (2024) provides evidence of the direct contribution of employee experience to innovation, productivity, and engagement, while Başar (2024) highlights the importance of managerial support, collaboration, development, and career-focused human resource practices in shaping positive employee experiences. Ahmad and Porkodi (2024) provide broader empirical support through systematic and meta-analytic evidence of a positive relationship between employee experience and organizational performance, while Udessa and Huluka (2024) demonstrate the relevance of employee-related experiences and engagement within public university settings. Taken together, the findings indicate that employee experience is strengthened when employees have opportunities to acquire knowledge, take on diverse responsibilities, develop professionally, collaborate with colleagues, and receive adequate organizational support.

The reviewed literature therefore suggests that universities can enhance institutional performance by deliberately managing employee experience through appropriate human resource practices. In public universities, opportunities for career development, professional training, mentorship, job enrichment, exposure to diverse responsibilities, supportive leadership, and effective collaboration can enable employees to accumulate valuable knowledge and competencies. These experiences can subsequently enhance engagement, innovation, productivity, and the capacity of academic and administrative staff to contribute to teaching, research, student services, and institutional administration. However, the reviewed studies also reveal a gap in empirical evidence concerning how specific dimensions of employee experience, particularly accumulated tenure, exposure to different roles, and the complexity of responsibilities, influence the performance of public universities in Kenya. The present study therefore seeks to address this gap by examining the contribution of employee experience to the performance of public universities in the Kenyan context.

2.2.2 The Moderating Role of Innovative Culture

Innovative culture refers to an environment that encourages creativity, tolerates thoughtful failure, and promotes open communication (Achdiat et al., 2022). Contemporary organizational theory suggests that the impact of human capital is strengthened when the culture acts as a conduit for its activation (Naqshbandi et al., 2022). In a university setting, an experienced professor or administrator may have the *knowledge* to improve performance, but without a culture that supports innovation, that knowledge may remain dormant or trapped within traditional silos.

Recent empirical studies indicate that employee experience is closely associated with innovative culture, particularly through employees' exposure to learning opportunities, diverse responsibilities, collaboration, knowledge sharing, and supportive organizational practices. Employee experience provides individuals with accumulated knowledge, skills, and organizational understanding, while an innovative culture creates an environment in which these capabilities can be applied through creativity, experimentation, idea sharing, and continuous improvement. The interaction between these two factors is particularly important in knowledge-intensive institutions such as public universities, where employees are expected to continuously adapt to changing educational, technological, and organizational demands.

Trivedi and Srivastava (2024) examined the relationship between human resource practices, organizational culture, and organizational innovativeness in the Indian information technology sector. Their findings established that an innovative-competitive culture significantly enhanced the contribution of human resource practices to organizational innovativeness. The study demonstrated that practices such as training, talent development, and performance-based rewards are more effective in promoting innovation when implemented within a culture that encourages creativity, experimentation, risk-taking, and continuous improvement. Although the study focused on human resource practices rather than employees' direct experience, its findings are relevant because training, development, and exposure to new responsibilities are important components of employees' workplace experiences. The study therefore suggests that employees are more likely to utilize their accumulated knowledge and experience innovatively when organizational culture supports experimentation and new ideas.

Similarly, Alosani and Al-Dhaafri (2023) investigated innovative culture and human resource management practices in government agencies in the United Arab Emirates. Their findings revealed that innovative culture positively influenced employee development, performance management, and participatory decision-making. The study further established that knowledge sharing strengthened the relationship between innovative culture and HRM effectiveness. These findings suggest that an innovation-oriented culture creates opportunities for employees to interact, exchange knowledge, develop new competencies, and participate in organizational decision-making. Such experiences can broaden employees' capabilities and enable them to apply their accumulated knowledge to organizational challenges. The findings are particularly relevant to public institutions because they demonstrate that innovative culture can support employee development and knowledge utilization even in environments characterized by formal procedures and bureaucratic structures.

Further evidence is provided by Başar (2024), who examined employee experience and employee engagement, with particular emphasis on managerial support and collaboration, organizational identification and development, and career-focused human resource practices. The study found that positive employee experiences were associated with higher levels of employee engagement. Managerial support, collaboration, developmental opportunities, and career-oriented HR practices were important in shaping employees' experiences and engagement. These findings are relevant to an innovative culture because supportive management, collaboration, professional development, and employee involvement create conditions that encourage employees to share knowledge, generate new ideas, and participate in organizational improvement. An organizational environment that values employees' development and contributions is therefore likely to create stronger foundations for innovation.

In the context of public universities, Udessa and Huluka (2024) examined employee engagement and organizational performance in Ethiopia. Their findings showed that employees' experiences within the organization, including exposure to responsibilities and opportunities for engagement, were associated with improved institutional outcomes. The study demonstrated that employees who are provided with supportive conditions and meaningful opportunities to participate in institutional activities are more likely to demonstrate higher engagement and effectiveness. Although the study did not directly examine innovative culture, its findings are important because employee engagement and participation are key to fostering an environment in which employees can share ideas, collaborate, and contribute to institutional improvement. Evidence from public universities in Ethiopia provides useful context for examining the relationship between employee experience and innovative culture in public universities in Kenya.

Collectively, the four studies demonstrate that employee experience and innovative culture are interconnected through employee development, collaboration, knowledge sharing, participation, and organizational support. Trivedi and Srivastava (2024) demonstrate the importance of an innovation-supportive culture in enabling employees to convert their capabilities into innovative outcomes, while Alosani and Al-Dhaafri (2023) emphasize the role of innovative culture in promoting employee development, participation, and knowledge sharing. Başar (2024) highlights the contribution of positive employee experiences, managerial support, collaboration, and career development to employee engagement, while Udessa and Huluka (2024) provide evidence from the public university context regarding the importance of employee engagement and supportive organizational conditions. Together, these findings suggest that employees' accumulated experiences are more likely to yield innovative contributions when universities cultivate a culture characterized by open communication, collaboration, knowledge sharing, experimentation, employee participation, and support for new ideas.

The reviewed evidence therefore provides a basis for examining innovative culture as an important organizational context for employee experience. In public universities, employees with diverse experiences and accumulated institutional knowledge can contribute to innovation when they are provided with opportunities to share ideas, participate in decision-making, collaborate across functions, and experiment with new approaches. Consequently, universities seeking to maximize the value of employee experience should complement career development, training, mentorship, and exposure to diverse responsibilities with deliberate efforts to establish an innovative culture. Such an approach can strengthen employees' capacity to apply their experience creatively and contribute to continuous institutional improvement.

3. Methodology

The study adopted a positivist research philosophy and a predominantly quantitative descriptive research design, supplemented by limited qualitative information from open-ended questionnaire items. The sampling frame was based on the Commission for University Education (CUE) list of public universities, from which 32 universities were selected from a population of 35 using multistage sampling. Stratified random sampling was applied according to the year of university charter, followed by simple random sampling within each stratum. The target population comprised 352 management staff, from whom a sample of 223 respondents was determined. Primary data were collected using structured self-administered questionnaires containing both closed- and open-ended items. Questionnaires were distributed physically, while Google Forms links were emailed to respondents who could not be reached in person. In addition, secondary data on university performance were obtained from institutional reports, government databases, and other official sources to complement the primary survey data and enhance the robustness of the findings.

Data were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize respondents' characteristics and the study variables. Inferential analysis employed correlation and multiple regression techniques to examine relationships among employee knowledge, skills, experience, attitude, and university performance. Hierarchical multiple regression was subsequently employed to assess the moderating effect of innovative culture on the relationship between employee experience and university performance. Before hypothesis testing, diagnostic tests for normality, multicollinearity, autocorrelation, and

homoscedasticity were conducted to establish the suitability of the data for regression analysis. Statistical significance was assessed at the 5% level ($p \leq 0.05$).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

This construct examined the influence of employee experience on the performance of public universities in Kenya. The findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Employee Experience

Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
I have held my current role in the university for a long period	191	1.00	5.00	3.18	1.34
Most staff have held their current roles for a short period	191	1.00	5.00	2.35	1.08
All staff have held several roles within this university	191	1.00	5.00	2.62	1.19
Only a few staff are assigned multiple responsibilities in this university	191	1.00	5.00	2.60	1.18
All staff here are exposed to a diverse work environment	191	1.00	5.00	3.56	1.02
Only academic staff are exposed to a diverse work environment in this university	191	1.00	5.00	2.31	1.12
The tasks I manage are highly complex	191	1.00	5.00	3.49	1.15
Complex tasks are assigned to senior management staff only	191	1.00	5.00	2.63	1.25
I have a high level of responsibility in my role	191	1.00	5.00	3.53	1.13
Many staff do not have a high level of responsibility in their roles	191	1.00	5.00	2.48	1.13
I have served in this university for a long period	191	1.00	5.00	3.12	1.30
Other staff of similar rank have short tenure in this university	191	1.00	5.00	2.60	1.23
Academic staff hold supervisory and leadership roles	191	1.00	5.00	3.44	1.21
Only non-teaching staff hold supervisory and leadership roles in this university	191	1.00	5.00	2.33	1.20

The results in Table 1 demonstrate that respondents generally reported favourable levels of employee experience within public universities. The highest mean score was recorded for the statement, “*All staff here are exposed to a diverse work environment*” ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.02$). This finding indicates that employees are generally exposed to diverse work situations and responsibilities, which can broaden their professional experience. The statement “*I have a high level of responsibility in my role*” also recorded a relatively high mean ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 1.13$), followed by “*The tasks I manage are highly complex*” ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 1.15$) and “*Academic staff holds supervisory and leadership roles*” ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.21$). These results suggest that employees are entrusted with significant responsibilities, handle relatively complex assignments, and have opportunities to undertake supervisory and leadership functions.

Moderate levels of agreement were also reported for *“I have held my current role in the university for a long period”* ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 1.34$) and *“I have served in this university for a long period”* ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 1.30$). The findings therefore suggest that respondents had accumulated a reasonable level of institutional and role-specific experience. However, the relatively moderate mean scores imply that employee experience may vary considerably across individuals and institutions.

In contrast, the lowest mean was obtained for the statement, *“Only academic staff are exposed to a diverse work environment in this university”* ($M = 2.31$, $SD = 1.12$). This was followed by *“Only non-teaching staff hold supervisory and leadership roles in this university”* ($M = 2.33$, $SD = 1.20$) and *“Most staff have held their current roles for a short period”* ($M = 2.35$, $SD = 1.08$). The relatively low scores indicate general disagreement with these statements and suggest that exposure to diverse work experiences and leadership responsibilities is not confined to one category of employees. Similarly, the mean of 2.48 ($SD = 1.13$) for the statement *“Many staff do not have a high level of responsibility in their roles”* indicates that respondents generally perceived employees as having meaningful responsibilities in their roles.

Overall, the findings indicate that employee experience within public universities is reflected not only in length of service but also in the breadth, complexity, and nature of work undertaken. Exposure to diverse work environments, complex assignments, leadership responsibilities, and decision-making opportunities can facilitate the accumulation of institutional knowledge and practical competencies. Such experiences may enhance employees’ adaptability, problem-solving capacity, professional judgment, and managerial capabilities, thereby strengthening their contribution to university performance.

The findings also indicate that retaining experienced and highly skilled employees requires more than maintaining existing employment arrangements. Respondents identified competitive remuneration, timely promotion, recognition, career development, professional training, supportive leadership, and favourable working conditions as important factors for retaining experienced personnel. These findings are consistent with Hansamali et al. (2024), who found that comprehensive reward systems, opportunities for career development, and supportive work environments are important for retaining skilled employees and improving organizational performance. The present findings therefore reinforce the argument that employee experience represents an important component of human capital whose value can be enhanced through appropriate institutional support and retention practices.

Respondents were further asked to identify measures that universities could adopt to retain highly skilled and experienced employees. The majority (150; 78.5%) emphasized the need for competitive remuneration, timely promotions, and effective reward and recognition mechanisms. Respondents explained that attractive salaries, periodic salary reviews, merit-based promotion, and recognition of employee contributions could encourage experienced employees to remain within their institutions. However, 41 (21.5%) respondents indicated that retention also depended on addressing broader organizational challenges, particularly poor working conditions, limited opportunities for career advancement, and inadequate managerial support. This finding demonstrates that although financial incentives are important, they may not, on their own, guarantee employee retention unless accompanied by improvements in the broader work environment.

The qualitative responses generated several major themes. The first was competitive remuneration and rewards. Responses emphasizing competitive salaries, improved remuneration, performance-based incentives, and regular salary reviews indicate that employees viewed financial rewards as an important mechanism for retaining experienced personnel. Respondents further suggested that remuneration should reflect employees' qualifications, competencies, experience, and contribution to institutional performance.

The second theme was career advancement and timely promotion. Respondents highlighted the importance of promoting deserving employees in a timely manner, establishing clear promotion procedures, recognizing academic achievements, and linking promotions to performance. These views suggest that transparent and merit-based career progression can enhance employee motivation, job satisfaction, and commitment to the institution.

The third theme was professional development and capacity building. Respondents recommended opportunities for further education, continuous professional development, training, research, and conference participation. Such initiatives provide employees with opportunities to update their knowledge and skills while simultaneously strengthening their professional attachment to the institution. Investment in employee development may therefore contribute to both staff retention and institutional capacity.

The fourth theme concerned the supportive work environment and leadership. Respondents identified improved working conditions, supportive leadership, reduced bureaucracy, fair treatment, and stronger staff welfare programmes as important measures for retaining experienced employees. These responses demonstrate that the organizational environment plays a significant role in determining whether employees remain committed to their institutions. Fair leadership, employee welfare, and positive workplace relationships can create conditions that encourage experienced staff to remain within the university.

The final theme was recognition and improved terms of service. Respondents emphasized the need to recognize outstanding performance, improve employment terms, provide job security, and ensure that employees are assigned responsibilities that correspond with their competencies. These practices were perceived as important for strengthening employee motivation, loyalty, and retention.

Taken together, the qualitative findings demonstrate that retaining experienced and highly skilled employees requires an integrated human resource management approach. Competitive remuneration should therefore be complemented by timely career progression, continuous professional development, supportive leadership, employee recognition, job security, and favourable working conditions. These findings complement the quantitative results by demonstrating that the value of human resource capital depends not only on employees' experience but also on the institutional conditions under which that experience is developed and utilized.

Nevertheless, the findings differ from those of Mehari et al. (2024), who reported that employee experience alone did not significantly enhance organizational performance in settings characterized by weak career progression structures, inadequate leadership support, and limited opportunities for continuous learning. Their findings suggested that long tenure and accumulated experience may have limited organizational value when employees perform repetitive tasks without opportunities for innovation, professional growth, or expanded responsibilities. In the present study, however, employee experience was reflected more broadly through exposure to diverse work environments, complex assignments, leadership responsibilities, and decision-making opportunities. These dimensions of experience may

enable employees to transform accumulated knowledge into practical competencies that support institutional performance.

The difference between the two findings may partly be explained by contextual variations. Public universities in Kenya operate within complex academic and administrative environments in which employees may undertake multiple responsibilities involving teaching, research, administration, supervision, leadership, and institutional decision-making. Such exposure can enable employees to develop institutional knowledge, adaptability, problem-solving skills, and managerial competence. Consequently, experience is likely to generate greater organizational value when employees are given opportunities to apply and expand the knowledge and competencies they have accumulated over time.

The findings further suggest that employee experience should not be evaluated exclusively according to years of service. Instead, it should be understood in terms of the quality, diversity, complexity, and relevance of experiences accumulated by employees. Public universities can maximize the value of employee experience by providing opportunities for job rotation, mentoring, committee participation, leadership assignments, cross-functional responsibilities, and continuous professional development. Management should also establish supportive human resource practices, including competitive remuneration, transparent promotion systems, recognition programmes, and conducive working environments.

Consequently, university administrators and policymakers should regard employee experience as a strategic human capital resource whose contribution to institutional performance depends on how effectively it is developed, supported, retained, and utilized. Creating an environment in which experienced employees can exercise their competencies, assume meaningful responsibilities, participate in decision-making, and continuously develop professionally is likely to enhance the translation of accumulated employee experience into improved performance of public universities.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

The correlation results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Correlation Results

Variables	Performance (Y)	Employee Experience (X)
Performance (Y)	1	.485 **
Employee Experience (X)	.485 **	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	—	.000
N	191	191

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

The results indicate a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between employee experience and university performance ($r = .485$, $p < .001$, $N = 191$). This suggests that improvements in employees' experience are associated with improvements in university performance. The relationship is statistically significant because the p-value (.000) is less than the 0.01 significance level.

4.3 Bivariate Regression Analysis (Direct Effect)

The regression results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Employee Experience on Performance

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.485 ^a	.235	.231	.52298		
a. Predictors: (Constant), X						
ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	15.865	1	15.865	58.005	.000 ^b
	Residual	51.694	189	.274		
	Total	67.559	190			
a. Dependent Variable: Y						
b. Predictors: (Constant), X						
Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.558	.180		8.639	.000
	Employee Experience (X)	.371	.049	.485	7.616	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Y

The findings presented in Table 3 demonstrate that employee experience is positively and statistically significantly associated with the performance of public universities in Kenya. The bivariate correlation coefficient of $r = 0.485$ ($p < 0.001$) indicates a moderate positive relationship, implying that improvements in employee experience are associated with corresponding improvements in university performance.

The model summary indicates an R value of 0.485 and an R^2 of 0.235, showing that employee experience explained 23.5% of the observed variation in university performance. The adjusted R^2 of 0.231 indicates that employee experience accounted for approximately 23.1% of the variation in performance after adjustment, while the remaining 76.9% was attributable to other factors not included in the model. The standard error of the estimate was 0.52298, indicating the variability between the observed and predicted performance scores.

The ANOVA results confirmed that the regression model was statistically significant, $F(1, 189) = 58.005$, $p < 0.001$. This finding demonstrates that employee experience significantly predicts the performance of public universities. The coefficient results further showed a positive and statistically significant effect of employee experience, with an unstandardized coefficient $B = 0.371$, a standardized beta $\beta = 0.485$, and a t-statistic $t = 7.616$ ($p < 0.001$). Therefore, a one-unit increase in employee experience was associated with a 0.371-unit increase in university performance, holding other factors constant. The resulting regression equation can be stated as:

$$Y = 1.558 + 0.371X_3 + \epsilon$$

where Y represents university performance, X_3 represents employee experience, 1.558 is the regression constant, 0.371 is the coefficient for employee experience, and ϵ represents the error term.

Based on these results, the null hypothesis (H_0), which stated that *employee experience has no significant influence on the performance of public universities in Kenya*, was rejected. The findings therefore provide sufficient empirical evidence to support the alternative hypothesis (H_a) that employee experience has a significant positive influence on university performance.

Although the proportion of performance variation explained by employee experience was lower than that explained by employee knowledge and employee skills, its contribution remains important. Experienced employees are likely to possess accumulated institutional knowledge, practical judgment, problem-solving capabilities, and familiarity with organizational processes. They can also contribute by mentoring less experienced colleagues, facilitating knowledge transfer, taking on complex responsibilities, and supporting informed decision-making. These attributes can enhance operational efficiency and institutional effectiveness. The findings therefore suggest that public universities should treat employee experience as a strategic human capital resource. Management should establish mechanisms that promote employee retention, career advancement, succession planning, mentoring, leadership development, and knowledge transfer. By creating conditions that enable experienced employees to apply and share their accumulated knowledge and competencies, universities can strengthen institutional capacity and improve overall organizational performance.

4.4 Moderation Analysis

Table 4: Employee Experience and Innovative Culture

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	.086	.142			.602	.548
Employee Experience (X)	.075	.033	.098		2.238	.026
Innovative Culture*Employee Experience (Z)	.070	.026	.117		2.694	.008

a. Dependent Variable: Y

The results in Table 4 indicate that employee experience has a positive and statistically significant effect on the outcome variable ($B = 0.075$, $\beta = 0.098$, $t = 2.238$, $p = 0.026$). This suggests that an increase in employee experience is associated with a corresponding improvement in university performance.

The interaction term between innovative culture and employee experience is also positive and statistically significant ($B = 0.070$, $\beta = 0.117$, $t = 2.694$, $p = 0.008$). This indicates that innovative culture significantly moderates the relationship between employee experience and university performance. Specifically, a stronger culture of innovation enhances the positive

contribution of employee experience to university performance. Therefore, the moderation hypothesis for employee experience is supported.

5. Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence that employee experience is a significant determinant of the performance of public universities in Kenya. However, the influence of experience is not automatic. The research establishes that Innovative Culture is the missing link in university management. Experience provides the what (institutional memory and skills), while an innovative culture provides the how (the willingness to apply those skills in new ways). Without a supportive culture, experience can lead to institutional rigidity; with it, experience becomes the engine of institutional excellence.

6. Recommendations

1. Strategic Role Rotation: Universities should implement policies that encourage staff to rotate through different academic and administrative functions. This reduces siloed experience and builds role diversity, which this study found to be a key driver of performance.
2. Mentorship-Performance Link: University management must institutionalize formal mentorship programs where the supervisory experience of senior staff is deliberately used to transfer tacit knowledge to younger faculty, ensuring institutional continuity.
3. Cultural Audits: Higher education policymakers should require universities to conduct annual cultural audits. These audits should measure psychological safety and support for risk-taking, ensuring that the environment is conducive to the high-level human capital the government is funding.
4. Incentivizing Innovation: Performance contracts for experienced staff should move beyond years of service to include Innovation Milestones, such as the development of new e-learning modules or the successful acquisition of international research grants.

References

- Ahmad, A. B., Butt, A. S., Chen, D., & Liu, B. (2020). A mediated model of the effect of organizational culture on the intentions to engage in change-supportive behaviors: insights from the theory of planned behavior. *Journal of Management & Organization*, 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1017/jmo.2020.41>
- Aithal, P. S., & Maiya, A. K. (2024). Development of a new conceptual model for quality services in HEIs. *International Journal of Management, Technology, and Social Sciences*, 8(4), 260–308.
- Alosani, M. S., & Al-Dhaafri, H. S. (2023). Service innovation in government: evidence from the UAE. *Management & Sustainability: An Arab Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/msar-11-2022-0057>
- Basar, D. (2024). The Relationship Between Employee Experience and Employee Engagement with The Moderating Role of Positive Affect in the Finance Sector. *Borsa Istanbul Review*, 24(5). <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214845024000814>
- Becker, G. S. (1964). *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis with Special Reference to Education*. University of Chicago Press.

- Creswell, J. W., & Inoue, M. (2024). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. SAGE Publications.
- Gede, D. U., & Huluka, A. T. (2024). Effects of employee engagement on organizational performance: case of public universities in Ethiopia. *Future Business Journal*, 10(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s43093-024-00315-7>
- Hackman, J. R., & Oldham, G. R. (1971). Development of the Job Diagnostic Survey. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 60(2), 159–170.
- Helfat, C. E., & Peteraf, M. A. (2015). Managerial cognitive capabilities and the microfoundations of dynamic capabilities. *Strategic Management Journal*, 36(6), 831–850.
- Ingosi, M. T., & Ali, U. (2024). Financial resources and performance of public universities in Kenya. *Journal of Accounting and Finance in Emerging Economies*, 10(3), 425–432.
- Kimonyo, T. (2024). *The Impact of Employee Experience on Organizational Performance: Driving Innovation, Engagement, and Customer Satisfaction*. 14(02), 220–229. <https://doi.org/10.58216/kjri.v14i02.417>
- Oparinde, O. R. (2022). Team cohesion as imperative for school management. *African Journal of Educational Management*, 23(1), 89–110.
- Trivedi, K. K., & Srivastava, L. (2023). The impact of intellectual capital-enhancing HR practices and culture on innovativeness—mediating role of knowledge management processes. *Journal of Organizational Effectiveness*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/joepp-05-2023-0174>
- Vereb, D., & Kozák, A. (2024). The importance of positive employee experience and its development through predictive analytics. *Journal of Modelling in Management*, 20(1), 51–62.